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Improving curriculum : practices and problems that exist in local school settings.

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IMPROVING CURRICULUM:
PRACTICES AND PROBLEMS THAT EXIST IN LOCAL SCHOOL SETTINGS

A Dissertation Presented

by

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This study is dedicated to my parents,

Alfred and Helen Feole,

from whom I inherited

all of the qualities that were necessary

to persevere and fulfill this goal.

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This doctoral degree was a labor of love. I owe a debt of gratitude to several individuals who provided a guiding light at the end of the tunnel during those times when the going got tough.

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ABSTRACT

IMPROVING CURRICULUM:
PRACTICES AND PROBLEMS THAT EXIST IN LOCAL SCHOOL SETTINGS

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The major purpose of this study was to determine the problems that public school systems encounter when attempting to involve principals and teachers in the process of curriculum improvement. A second purpose was to identify the procedures that school systems use to improve curriculum and the extent of principal and teacher involvement in the curriculum decision making process.

The study was conducted through two strands of inquiry. The first strand involved the distribution of a *Curriculum Improvement Survey* to all communities in the state of Rhode Island. Of the thirty-five Directors of Curriculum, twenty-six completed and returned the survey. Their responses provided a broad spectrum from which to view how, individually and collectively, curriculum improvement was being implemented in response to national and state initiatives. The second strand was an ethnographic study of several different committees within a local school community that were involved in various aspects of curriculum improvement.

Findings suggest curriculum improvement is a shared responsibility among a cross section of individuals within school systems. The primary initiators and major determinants that influence the curriculum improvement process were identified. Most

school systems reported having long range plans for improvement that are guided by administrative regulations and are implemented within varying cyclical time frames. Smaller districts where administrators and teachers wear "different hats" than in larger systems appear to be less formal in their approaches to curriculum change and the improvement process is on-going without regulations. In regard to participation in the process, the survey responses and the plans suggest that principals and teachers are given ample opportunities to participate in decision making to improve curriculum, however, their degree of participation varies with the type of decision they are being asked to make.

The major problems in implementing curriculum improvement that were identified by the twenty-six school systems included insufficient time; educators' lack of curriculum theory and practical experiences; insufficient funds; and contractual considerations. The in-depth study of one school system also documented these problems, as well as: the lack of a common language for deliberating and writing curriculum; personal attitudes and professional ability levels that hinder role fulfillment; inequitable treatment of task force committees by administrators; and pressures to serve as a "rubber stamp" for principals and administrators to ensure the fulfillment of their political agendas.

Recommendations for future research are suggested to determine ways to strengthen communication between the state and local school levels; to identify how institutions of higher learning may better prepare educators for curriculum leadership; and to examine the role of Director of Curriculum in order to identify leadership characteristics that are essential to curriculum improvement on a system wide basis.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The ability to create appropriate conditions so that all students learn well is a persistent challenge for educators. Too many administrators and teachers do not meet this challenge because they become locked into routines and practices that are often in conflict with what is needed to produce effective learning. Unfortunately, they continue to operate within a conventional paradigm that reinforces nonproductive ways of addressing curriculum improvement.

Tyler (1990) reminds us that "learning is the process by which one develops new patterns of behaving, that is, new ways of thinking, feeling, or acting" (p. 1). He believes that crucial to this process are conditions that promote a supportive learning environment. In order to establish and maintain these conditions for all students, it is essential to have a vision for curriculum improvement that is evolutionary; one that encourages the ongoing assessment of curriculum and instruction and offers the time and support in which to redefine curriculum policy, procedures, and programs. The individuals who are responsible for curriculum decisions must be afforded opportunities to continually explore new procedures for renewing curriculum to ensure its alignment with students' learning. In doing so, school systems will be setting a new precedent for how curricula issues are addressed and problems are resolved, while insuring the continual renewal of the learning conditions that are in place for all students.

In reality, however, curriculum improvement for many school systems can best be described as a reactionary and revolutionary event sporadically ignited by internally and externally mandated change. It may be reactionary in the sense that it relies on the personal and professional judgements of individuals who either operate outside of or within different domains of the hierarchical educational structure. Each individual contributes diverse philosophical and educational beliefs that are driven by the position they hold, personal agendas, learning experiences, and the latest educational innovations. Curriculum improvement may be revolutionary in the sense that it constitutes change, which is often met with much opposition if the individuals involved do not have a stake in its conception, development, and implementation. These two factors coupled with inconsistent and unrealistic timelines for initiating and realizing any improvement contribute to the failure of many curriculum reform efforts.

Throughout the last decade scholars have conducted studies of curriculum improvement within various school systems. These studies reveal that the problems most systems face do not lie in the proposed changes, but can be attributed to the restrictive decision making process that is used to determine curriculum policy (Fullan, 1991, Sarason, 1990, Barth, 1990). Furthermore, their findings strongly suggest that consideration must be given to the nature of the improvement effort. That is, to the level at which the ideas originate, to the extent to which the ideas are developed, to the individuals who have a hand in the process and most important, to how decisions are made.

Examining procedures for curriculum improvement at the local level is a factor that should be considered by school personnel. By initiating such an inquiry, administrators

and teachers may assess their decision making practices and the environment in which they function. On a personal level, it is likely to engage them in a self-study of their own thinking and behavior toward change and decision making. Such inquires may assist in the identification of procedures that either hinder or encourage their efforts to make wise curriculum decisions.

Marcel Proust wrote "the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes" (p. 1). Acquiring a sense of renewal that encourages constructive ways of examining the learning environment is necessary to instill the perception of curriculum improvement as an evolutionary process. In turn, educators must develop positive attitudes toward constructive educational change and must share the responsibility for building an environment for learning that provides children from all families with a quality education on equal terms.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research is to identify the problems that school systems may encounter when involved in curriculum improvement. First, this study identifies the procedures used by these school systems to improve curriculum. Further, some of the major ways in which school systems involve teachers and principals in curriculum decision making are determined. Finally, an ethnographic study of one specific school system is conducted to examine some of the major problems that occur when attempts are made to implement curriculum improvement. Three broad research questions guide this study:

- What are the procedures used by selected public school systems to improve curriculum?

- What are the major ways in which selected public school systems involve teachers and principals in curriculum decision making?
- What are some of the major problems that a public school system may experience when attempting to implement curriculum improvement?

Definition of Terms

Four key terms are central to this study.

Curriculum Improvement is a multifaceted term, which constitutes the desire to make changes in the way curriculum is perceived, developed, implemented, and evaluated. These changes are intended to result in educational conditions that help students improve their learning.

Procedures for Curriculum Improvement denotes the existence of a conceptual framework which outlines the steps established by a school system for individuals to follow as they plan, develop, implement, and evaluate curriculum. Within this set of guidelines, specific roles and responsibilities may also be defined for the individuals who are participating in curriculum improvement.

Curriculum Decision Making is the process through which individuals who hold various positions within the hierarchical structure of a school system engage in and exert influence on a broad range of organizational, administrative, curricular and instructional decisions. The structure and depth of the individuals' participation may vary between school systems due to the procedures that are in place for creating and implementing curricular change, as well as, the individuals' personal and professional preferences for involvement. Particular attention will be paid to how school systems involve teachers and principals in curriculum decision making.

Curriculum Director or Curriculum Coordinator is the individual within a school system who is responsible for overseeing the curriculum improvement process. In many instances, the individual may hold more than one position within the system. For example, a person may hold a primary position as the Assistance Superintendent, a principal, or a classroom teacher and, at the same time, be responsible for coordinating the development, implementation, or evaluation of curriculum for the entire school system.

Significance of the Study

School systems are under constant pressure to show that they are helping students improve their learning. A primary example is the national and local concern that is often raised each year with the publication of low standardized test scores. The response on the national level to this pressure for improved learning is the formation of commissions to develop guidelines and benchmarks to insure student success. State departments of education often establish blue ribbon panels to study the causes of decreased or inconsistent test scores, while accusing fingers point to administrators, teachers, and curriculum as the culprits. In response, school officials often hurriedly create committees to implement the current list of national and state mandates, while piloting the latest textbooks and packaged instructional strategies claiming to improve student learning. For all involved, it seems that much emphasis is placed on finding ready-made solutions that will quickly and quietly put the problems to rest.

This study shifts the emphasis from applying quick fix solutions to suggesting ways in which school systems can engage in effective decision making practices to ensure that

curriculum is in line with students' academic needs and society's demands. This research is timely and potentially significant to state officials, school officials, and teachers in several ways.

First, this study is important because it provides an overview of various procedures for curriculum decision making that are used by school systems. On a state wide level, this study may provide the initiators of curriculum reform within State Departments of Education with data pertaining to the extent to which their initiatives are being implemented and the impact of these initiatives on curriculum improvement within each school system. On the school district level, this information may enable individuals who are planning curriculum improvement to see how they may create and implement a system of procedures that effectively engage teachers and principals in curriculum decision making. For institutions of higher learning, information from this study may prove to be a valuable resource to be used in the preparation of leaders for the profession. For these future leaders will need to be versed in curriculum development in order to provide opportunities for participation in curriculum decision making at the local school level.

Second, this study is valuable because it suggests pragmatic ways of ensuring that administrators, teachers, and Curriculum Directors are involved in curriculum decision making. Administrators and teachers are the primary gatekeepers of the curriculum that is presented to the students. It is important for these individuals to become skilled in making decisions that match learners and curriculum. To become accomplished decision makers, educators need a nurturing environment in which they have the opportunity to reflect upon their efforts to initiate curriculum improvement. Their reflection will provide them with a

clear understanding of their own thinking and help them to create an arena where dialogue is welcomed and risk taking is encouraged.

Third, the results of this study are important because they will extend our knowledge of ways school systems engage in curriculum improvement. It is essential that all educators fully understand the positive impact they can have on effecting desired change within their school systems, schools, and classrooms. Developing administrators and teachers' awareness of how school systems attempt to promote curriculum improvement may increase their understanding of the curriculum improvement process. If educators gain a deeper understanding of their role in curriculum improvement, they will more likely ensure the continuous assessment of curriculum, which in turn, encourages the creation of appropriate learning conditions for all students.

Finally, this study is significant because it will encourage school systems to develop a productive vision of curriculum improvement; one that is based upon the collaborative efforts of local educators and members of the community at large. It will be particularly useful for Curriculum Directors as they go about engaging teachers, principals, and in some instances, parents or representatives from the community in the process of curriculum improvement. As the leaders of curriculum improvement efforts, it is equally important that Curriculum Directors be knowledgeable of the various approaches used to engage individuals in the curriculum improvement process, the problems they may encounter, and the strategies that can be used to remedy those problems. This knowledge will assist them in their assessment of the conditions that exist for curriculum improvement within their school systems, and more important, in their efforts to establish guidelines that will ensure meaningful and ongoing curricular change.

Delimitations of the Study

This study is based upon some assumptions about decision making within the curriculum improvement process and approaches school systems use to encourage the participation of administrators and teachers in curriculum decision making.

Specifically, it is assumed that the school systems have a set of rational procedures to develop curriculum. However, because of the multidimensional nature of curriculum (Sinclair & Ghory, 1987; Eisner, 1990; McCutcheon, 1988; and Glatthorn, 1987), numerous paradigms exist that impact the way educators think about and respond to curriculum improvement. The procedures that are described in this study will not address all of the possible domains of curriculum decision making (Parsons, 1960; Alutto & Belasco, 1972: Bacharach, Bamberger, Conley, & Bauer, 1990; Goodlad, 1979; Klein, 1991) and, therefore, may not be considered characteristic of school systems throughout the United States. Rather, the study will center on varied school systems in one state that are attempting to improve school curriculum.

Further, it is assumed that administrators and teachers hold a participatory role in the decision making process involved in curriculum improvement. Administrators and teachers make decisions that impact the overall climate for teaching and learning on a daily basis. However, research suggests that the degree to which teachers participate in decision making is based upon their satisfaction with the kind of decisions they are asked to make, (Duke, Showers & Imber, 1980; Mohrman, Cooke & Mohrman, 1979; Bacharach, Bamberger, Conley & Bauer, 1990), and how they view their role as autonomous decision makers (Ben-Peretz & Tamir, 1981). This study is delimited in the sense that it will focus solely on the decisions for curriculum improvement and not on the

immediate decisions teachers and principals encounter and engaged in throughout the course of the school day.

Also, it is assumed that school systems have established steps to ensure that curriculum improvement is a collaborative effort and an ongoing process to provide appropriate learning conditions for all students. The school systems participating in this research are representative of a cross section of demographic characteristics that may be similar to school systems within urban, rural, and suburban cities and towns across the country. However, the school systems will be selected from the state of Rhode Island because of this state's ongoing effort to improve curriculum and because the researcher is most familiar with the school systems in this state.

Finally, one specific school system will be utilized for an ethnographical study. The focus of the study is to analyze the problems of implementing a plan for curriculum improvement when it involves the need to make numerous decisions, a variety of stakeholders, and different decision making approaches to complete the specific tasks. The selected school system is actively involved in attempting to bring about curriculum improvement at the local level through the implementation of a district-wide reform policy. The chances of identifying problems that are commonly experienced when attempting to improve curriculum will be enhanced because of the active involvement of teachers and principals in the improvement process that is initiated and supported by the selected school system. Simply put, it makes sense to collect data about the difficulties that are experienced in making curriculum decisions in a school system where active curriculum improvement is taking place.

It should be noted, however, that the researcher is a veteran educator within the community in which the study was conducted. This close proximity has its advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, working within the school system enables the researcher to be privy to the inner workings of the system, the origin of established policies and procedures, and have established personal and professional relationships between and among administrators and teachers who are engaging in curriculum improvement. The disadvantage to having such a close perspective is the influence it may on the collection and analysis of data. In anticipation of pre-established perceptions and pre-drawn conclusions, a system of triangulation will be enacted to review the data collection and analysis, and thus, reduce the influence of personal bias.

Approach of the Study

This study is conceptual and practical in nature. Two separate strands of inquiry were conducted to determine the curriculum improvement procedures selected public schools use and the problems they encounter when involving principals and teachers in the process. The first strand of inquiry was a broad base investigation through a comprehensive survey of all thirty-five public schools systems in one state that were involved in a state mandated effort to improve curriculum. Using the three research questions as the foundation, objectives were developed to collect empirical data pertaining to the procedures and problems each school system experienced when involved curriculum improvement. Additional information in the form of written documents that describe procedures or personnel involvement was also requested and received from six public school systems.

An attempt was made to get a sample consisting of a cross-section of school systems that were representative of systems across the country. A review of demographic data of the responding schools offered some assistance. In addition, six of the twenty-six public school systems that responded to the survey provided additional written documentation of their curriculum procedures. A review of their specific demographics revealed a cross section of urban, suburban and rural communities with diverse approaches to curriculum improvement. This quantitative and qualitative data provided a better opportunity to assess and describe curriculum improvement efforts, and to describe the problems that were individually and collectively encountered. More important, this cross-section representation offered a sufficient rationale for generalizing the research findings pertaining to the procedures and problems of curriculum decision making in response to state initiated curriculum reform.

The second strand of inquiry involved an ethnographic study of one public school system that was involved in various stages of curriculum improvement. The site was selected based upon its locale and the researcher's ability to observe, participate, and record the discussions and explanations of activities that were pertinent to selective groups of teachers and principals who were engaged in curriculum improvement. Data pertaining to the procedures used in curriculum improvement and the various ways principals and teachers are involved in curriculum decision making was collected. However, the primary data of this inquiry are the descriptions of the problems that were encountered by principals and teacher involvement in each of the selective groups that were involved in the process. This qualitative measure of problems in one school system was then compared to the quantitative and limited qualitative data that was supplied by the

responding school systems in one state. The intention was to obtain both a broad and in-depth perspective of the nature of the problems that were observed and reported during the various attempts to improve curriculum. In turn, this information may encourage those individuals responsible for initiating curriculum improvement to define how to deal with or alleviate them in the future.

This introductory chapter established the purpose for the study, as well as its significance and delimitations. The next chapter establishes a theoretical and practical foundation for the study. In an effort to demonstrate the magnitude and multi-dimensionality of curriculum improvement, it was necessary to present the research in four major parts. The first part examines the curriculum improvement by defining four theoretical orientations and discussing procedural aspects that influence the individuals who are involved in the process and how decisions are made. The second part of the review highlights national initiatives and their implications for state and local curriculum efforts. The third part focuses on curriculum reform efforts generated at the state level and their impact within local school districts. The fourth and last part of this literature review considers the process of curriculum decision making and the models that have been used to encourage the participation of principals and teachers in the process. Collectively, this body of research provides a conceptual picture of curriculum decision making on the national, state, and local school levels in theory and in practice.

Chapter Three describes the methodology used to obtain quantitative and qualitative data for both strands of inquiry. For the first strand, the selection of schools and the sample group, the development of the survey instrument, and the procedures for collecting, reporting and analyzing the data are described. For the second strand of

inquiry, this chapter describes the setting of the school system, the selective groups of individuals observed, the data collection instrument for recording their decision making activities and problems, and the efforts to eliminate bias in reporting and in analyzing the data.

Chapter Four reports, analyzes and interprets the findings of the two strands of inquiry. They are discussed individually and then collectively to determine their common elements and unique characteristics. The final chapter, Chapter Five provides an overview of the entire study. In addition to reviewing the key aspects of the study, it outlines implications for further research on the involvement of principals and teaching in the decision making process to improve curriculum.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review consists of four major parts. The first part examines the various perspectives for curriculum improvement. The second part presents an historical account of national initiatives that have been legislated to promote curriculum improvement. The third part of this literature review discusses state initiated reform efforts to improve curriculum. Finally, the fourth part reviews curriculum decision making and the involvement of teachers and principals in the curriculum improvement process. Collectively, this body of research provides a foundation for understanding and discussing practices and problems in curriculum improvement at the school system level.

Theoretical and Procedural Perspectives of Curriculum Improvement

> Method is derived from observation of what actually happens, with a view to seeing it happen better next time.
>
> (Dewey, 1944, p. 168)

Research reveals that as each decade unfolds so dawns a new vision to reform education. Embedded within these reforms are initiatives that establish mandates, accountability directives and various other changes in educational policy (Bell, 1993). Lost in the shuffle of program and policy changes, revamping of roles and responsibilities, and the pressure to improve standardized test scores, is a clear understanding of how each highly theoretical reform effort may be verbalized and translated into practice to improve curriculum at the local school level. Research also reveals that the amount of attention paid to developing curriculum improvement procedures varies with each reform effort. In

many cases, the broad content oriented statements outline specific goals, objectives, courses and time limits, but do not offer practical suggestions on how to achieve them.

It is the intent of this part of the literature review to examine the curricular theories and procedural modes of thought that have influenced the process of curriculum improvement. Four orientations of curriculum theory (Shubert, 1993) will be examined followed by a discussion of the logistics and deliberate modes of thought that have influenced the procedural aspects of curriculum improvement. This body of research serves to define a theoretical foundation to increase our understanding of the curriculum improvement efforts that have been made at the national and state levels and within local school system settings.

Orientations of Curriculum Theory

In addition to the confusion that often surrounds efforts to improve curriculum are the perceptions that exist for the term "curriculum improvement." Curriculum improvement conjures up numerous images and responses depending upon an individual's position or role within the educational system. It may refer to a standardized method of aligning every academic area to a broad vision statement, a set of beliefs and student outcomes. At the other end of the spectrum, curriculum improvement may refer to minimum changes in strategies or activities proposed within a thematic unit at a specific grade level.

Schubert's historical perspective of curriculum improvement provides an encompassing picture from which to discuss the nature of this multidimensional process. His research identified four different and often controversial theoretical orientations that have had an impact on educational reform efforts for decades. He pointed out that these

orientations along with essential elements of curriculum development. The elements include those identified by the Tyler Rationale (1949) which focused on purposes, learning experiences, organization, and evaluation; Dewey's balanced attention to the learner, subject matter, and society (1916); and Schwab's addition of the teacher (1970). All play an important role in the perceptions and beliefs that educators have brought, and continue to bring, to the curriculum improvement process. The four orientations are outlined in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1
Orientations of Curriculum Theory by Schubert

INTELLECTUAL TRADITIONALISTS	SOCIAL BEHAVIORISTS	EXPERIMENTALISTS	CONCILIATORISTS
Advocate knowledge & skill acquisition for all students;	Attention to time on task and a list between behavioral objectives and standardized test scores;	Advocate the progressive organization of curriculum by moving from the psychological to the logical;	Believe that curriculum development can occur when teachers and students interact;
Less supportive of curriculum development;	Evaluation guides revision and shapes future curriculum reform efforts;	Their understanding is embedded in the everyday experiences that consider students' interests and concerns.	Teachers, learners, parents, and other stakeholders are called upon to contribute to a structured form.
Believe that curriculum already exists through the classics and knowledge disciplines.	Scientific/quantitative approach – purposes, delineated learning activities, scope and sequence of knowledge, skills, and content, instructional models.	Draw upon the knowledge disciplines in eclectic and interdisciplinary fashion;	

The first two orientations describe a systematic top-down approach to curriculum improvement. Decisions pertaining to curriculum content, skills, evaluation, and general format are made by individuals far removed the classroom setting. The emphasis is placed on regimenting and regulating knowledge and skill with the expectation that all students

achieve of total mastery. The third orientation, proposed by the Experimentalists, promotes a child-centered approach. Curricular decisions are based on providing real life learning experiences that consider the whole child. Knowledge and skill are presented through a interdisciplinary approach to enable students to understand their importance and relevancy in their daily lives. While this orientation recognizes the importance of involving the stakeholders in the process of developing curriculum, it does so at the implementation stage.

The Conciliatorists who promoted the fourth orientation acknowledged the existence of the first three orientations, yet, grounded their curricular theory within the classroom setting by focusing on the interaction between the teacher and students. These theorists believed that curriculum development is a collective effort on the part of all the individuals who pose both external and internal influence on the learning environment. However, when viewed and used collectively as they have been during the last three decades, these four orientations offer a plausible reason for the confusion that exists when curriculum improvement was attempted at the national, state, or district levels.

Another point of consideration involves the procedural aspects that each of these orientations promotes in relation to the decision making practices involved in improving curriculum. While it is obvious through the individual descriptions that each orientation designates where decisions are made, who makes them, and what the decisions get made, all are remiss in clarifying how the decisions are made. This factor exists in two opposing schools of thought, "logistics and deliberation" (McKeon, 1952). As the following discussion demonstrates, they have become the focal point of several studies that examined the procedural aspects of improving curriculum.

Logistics vs. Deliberation

The logistic mode treats theory and practice as separate entities. External forces provide the theory or guidelines while teachers are responsible for the practice. Clear examples of the use of this mode are evident in the views drafted by the intellectual traditionalists and the social behaviorists. The experimentalists work within a fine line between the two modes of thought. Some credence is given to local school level participation as a formality, rather than as a deliberate action to secure input from the various stakeholders who will be on the receiving end of the finished product. The deliberate mode brings theory and practice together by engaging stakeholders in the process of inquiry.

Schwab's (1970) series of papers on the practical arts focused on "deliberation" and the "practical" to redirect the course of curriculum work. He believed that the method of deliberation involves "weighing and examining the reasons for and against a measure, and giving careful consideration and mature reflection to choices: it often involves considered action by a group of persons" (Harris, 1986, p. 117). The practical is associated with action. Schwab argued that the problems that arise in curriculum are practical problems about choice, about action, about what is to be done. They are not theoretical or scientific in nature, and should therefore, be addressed by methods that promote choice and action. Schwab stated that:

> The field of education is moribund. It is unable, by its present methods and principals, to continue its work and contribute significantly to the advancement of education. It requires new principles which will generate a new view of the character and variety of its problems. It requires new methods appropriate to the new budge of problems....

Further more, he believed that:

> ...there will be a renascence of the field of curriculum, a renewed capacity to contribute to the quality of American Education, only if curriculum energies are in large part diverted from theoretic pursuits (global principles and comprehensive patterns, the search for stable sequences and invariant elements, the construction of taxonomies of supposedly fixed or recurrent kinds) to three other modes of operation...the practical, the quasi-practical, and the eclectic (p. 287-288).

These concepts promoted by Schwab have received considerable attention in numerous studies that explored various aspects of deliberation. Pereira (1984) explored one set of the practical arts identified by Schwab: the arts of perception, which "help us to see and give meaning to the details of the situation, details which are rich, variable, and particular." He considered the most crucial aspect of curriculum deliberation to be "the ability to discriminate and give meaning to details" (p. 348). He also outlined three additional practical arts identified by Schwab which complete the deliberation process. They include:

PROBLEMATION
- Make a diagnosis of what is going wrong and why
- Formulate the problem that will require attention

PRESCRIPTION
- Inventory the resources and constraints
- Generate a plan of action to resolve the problem

COMMITMENT
- Rehearse the consequences of the proposed action
- Terminate deliberation and take action

Further research of curriculum deliberation was conducted by Roby (1986) who investigated habits that often impede the curriculum deliberation process previously describe. He stated the habits include (1) rushing to the solution reinforced by crisis consciousness and utopian anticipation; (2) externalizing the elements of the problematic situation and excluding or shortchanging commonplaces of education; and (3) having a

global mentality, pet solutions that translate into tunnel vision, and the lone ranger approach, and finally, (4) expecting linear progress and the intolerance of uncertainty (p. 21). Like Reid (1978), Roby believed that the complexity of the deliberation process and the adverse effect of customary behaviors by the individuals engaged in the process have produced a set of conflicting visions for making decisions that impact how curriculum improvement takes place at the local school level.

In 1986, Harris explored the possible reasons for the limited amount of reported studies that involve the use of the arts of deliberation. Her research focused on three modes of discourse that are used to communicate intentions: persuasive writing, descriptions of practice, and theory-based prescriptions. Persuasive practices include descriptions of practices that are recommended or frequently used. However, as Harris points out, these descriptions may suggest practices that the curriculum writers may not necessary be familiar with and are therefore not practical or workable. Descriptive discourses provide practitioners with a visual representation of practices that can be used to persuade or illustrate terms, ideas, or theories. While the use of imagery does have potential, she concluded that descriptive discourses about curriculum deliberation is "embedded within theoretical formulation" and "do not adequately reflect the principles they are suppose to illustrate." (p. 130).

Theoretical discourse serves to communicate those practices that can not be explained through descriptive discourse. She pointed out that the four types: explanatory theories, doctrines, applied theories, and practice theories, provide practitioners with frameworks for understanding, principal structures, and generalized approaches, but in essence, do not translate into the practical. Harris ended with a recommendation that

what is needed are practice theories that can be implemented by practitioners as they engaged in curriculum decision making. Her research highlighted one study of deliberation that was conducted by Walker on the use deliberation during the curriculum development process. It will be presented in the fourth section of this literature review.

Summary

This part of the literature review examined curriculum improvement in reference to its theoretical underpinnings. It defined the orientations that have transcended the curriculum field and contributed to its complexity and multidimensionality. Through these defined orientations, insight into the processes, the procedures, and the players involved in curriculum improvement was made evident. The next part of this review examines these orientations in light of the national initiatives that were exploited during the eighties and early nineties for curriculum improvement.

National Initiatives for Educational Reform

> While the 70's witnessed the emergence of teacher proof schooling, the 80's reverted back to the basics.
>
> (Fullan, 1991, p. 18).

The debate over theory and practice and the tensions that exist for how each are perceived and documented were examined by Fullan in his research of educational innovations. He revealed that educational reform efforts of the last few decades primarily originated in response to the social, economic and political climates of the time, as well as previous failed reform efforts. Fullan concluded that national educational reform efforts "have gone through at least four phases since 1960 - adoption, implementation failure, implementation success, and intensification vs. restructuring" (p. 18) at the state and local

school levels. This constant state of flux and failure may stem from the limited time frames or windows of opportunity that state departments of education and school systems have to become familiar, implement, and assess an initiative before a new one surfaces to take its place.

Studies conducted throughout the 80's concur with Fullan's findings as they describe it as the decade of educational debate where a Acarousel of reform" (Deal, 1990) was primarily contradictory in nature, poorly implemented and eventually abandoned (Orlich, 1989). Four national movements that occurred during that period were referred to as Awaves of reform" (Darling-Hammond, 1993; Futell, 1989). They were viewed by many as severely flawed and appear to be strictly cosmetic, offering simple solutions to complex questions.

It is the intent of this part of the literature review to present the national initiatives whose premises stem from the curriculum orientations and procedural perspectives that were previously discussed. These waves of reform called for major changes in how state departments of education and public school systems interacted and conducted business. Among the titles and catch phrases attached to these ideas are: School or Site-Based Management, America/Goals 2000, Out-Come Based Education, Common Core of Learning, and Systemic Reform.

School or Site-Based Management

From 1983 to 1985, it is estimated that at least 700 pieces of legislature were passed to reform schools and those who worked in them (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1993). Among them was the federal document, *A Nation At Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education) in 1983. It stated that we have dismantled essential support

systems and thus, "have been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament" (p. 5). This legislative blueprint also highlighted the goals of equity and high quality schooling as the keys to strengthening America's economy and improving society. It called for tougher course requirements, higher college admission standards, a longer school day, merit pay for teachers and the participation of all citizens in the education process.

Specific references to curriculum were evident in the content of Recommendation A which described a "high level of shared education" through the "Five New Basics," a four year curriculum plan for high schools (p. 24). This top down proposal focused primarily on developing stricter guidelines for bits and pieces of the education system, while offering little assistance to local school settings on how to create and align curriculum that reflected the proposed changes. In essence, this first wave of reform was long on broad sweeping curriculum change, but short on specifics for making the change a reality.

The second wave of reform occurred with the formation of the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession of the Carnegie Forum on Education and Economy. Their report, *A Nation Prepared*: *Teachers For the Twenty First Century* was published in 1986. This initiative focused on reforming the teaching profession through licensing, shared curriculum decision making in line with district/state goals, the creation of lead teachers, stricter certification requirements, better prepared minority teachers, merit pay and increased teacher salaries. In contrast to the 1983 reform agenda, this legislative action looked to the local school systems, to teachers and to the teaching profession to lead the education reform movement. However, despite its focus on a local level, this

effort was also seen as impractical because of the difference in certification requirements and teacher contract obligations that existed in all fifty states.

At the same time, The Holmes Group, made up of representatives from research universities around the country, also looked to reform teacher education. Their report, *Tomorrow's Teachers: A Report of the Holmes Group* (1983), focused on national testing for teachers, creating a networking system among universities and improving the school as a workplace. As Orlich (1989) pointed out in his review of educational reform, the similarity between the Holmes Group recommendations to the previous report may lie in the fact that many of the same writers served on both committees. These reports stimulated educational reform on two fronts. On one hand, they proposed the imposition of stricter guidelines and standards. On the other hand, they encouraged school site-management with the intent of decentralizing the decision making process and placing it in the hands of teachers and administrators within local school settings. Conley & Bacharach (1990) concluded that the key issue in school site-management was "not how to achieve it, but how to achieve collegial and collaborative management at the school level" (p. 540). Achieving this goal required strategic planning to encourage management through participatory decision making.

This second wave of reform encouraged districts and local schools to become involved in making decisions about their workplace - supporting participation on a management level and encouraging involvement in curriculum improvement. More important, it prompted the next wave of reform in the 90's – the setting of educational standards to prepare students for the workforce of the twenty-first century.

America/Goals 2000 – Standards of Excellence

While school systems across the U.S. were struggling to see their way through shared decision making and site-based management, critical opponents of these programs were gathering the ammunition they needed to find other means to reform education. In searching for a remedy to America's lagging economic situation, national attention turned toward the education systems of other countries around the world who were producing highly prepared skilled workers. Commissioned studies focused on how competitive countries prepared and assessed their students. Review of the world class standards for education set by other countries revealed that each school system differed dramatically, but all expressed two important lessons:

(1) There is more than one way to help students achieve excellence.

(2) Schools must work as systems whose parts are focused, coherent, consistent, and have publicly articulated goals (Resnick & Noble,1995).

Based upon the results gleaned from the international studies, a new reform initiative of economic imperatives was established to support the goal of producing graduates who would be prepared for the 21st century to staff American's businesses and promote industry.

Thus, the third wave of educational reform turned toward the preparation of students for the work force. In April 1991, President Bush unveiled his four-part educational strategy, "America 2000" saying that, "Education is not just about making a living; it is about making a life"(p. vi). Shortly thereafter, the U.S. Department of Labor Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills published its SCANS Report (1992). This document identified the foundational skills, personal qualities, and

competencies that are needed for high-performance work. Together, these documents formed the cornerstone for educational reform and paved the way for each state to create standards for student achievement, develop assessments to measure the progress toward these standards and outline strategies to help students meet them. Though much controversy arose at first regarding the need for national standards, support for this reform movement continued to grow.

The decision to develop national standards was the brainchild of the National Council on Educational Standards and Testing (NCEST), headed by Lamar Alexander. This bipartisan Task Force of educators and legislators was created by Congress to examine the feasibility and desirability of a national system of standards (O'Neil, 1993). The result of the research was a set of recommendations for the development of:

(1) content standards by subject area
(2) student performance standards
(3) school delivery standards
(4) national assessments

The immediate concerns surrounding these recommendations focused on the cost of such a venture, as well as, how the standards and assessments would be determined and who would be involved in their development. Eisner (1993) spoke for many individuals when he questioned the use and impact of standards. He quoted from Dewey in saying that, "Standards are units of measurement" (1993) "...they function as symbols and as vehicles for describing rather than appraising a set of qualities...applying standards in Dewey's terms, we get answers to questions pertaining to amounts" (p.22). Like many, Eisner believes that the difficulty lies in the way that standards would be derived and what would be done with the information after standards had been applied.

To combat these concerns and others, the NCEST enlisted assistance from the states by offering funding in the form of grants to encourage their active participation in developing their own K-12 curriculum frameworks, while content standards were being developed by the perspective disciplines on the national level. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) received a monetary award and was the first group to develop and publish national standards for the area of mathematics in 1989. At the state level, upon demonstration that their frameworks addressed teacher education reform, teacher certification, staff development, and assessment (Ravich, 1993), the states received funding to implement their plans

O'Neil's (1993) research into whether standards can make a difference revealed that the impact of these standards was mixed. His researched revealed that many states had begun revising their curriculum frameworks for math to reflect the new standards and develop performance-based assessments. However, the survey conducted by the NCTM group in 1991 revealed that only 22% of teachers in grades K-4, 31% in grades 5-8, and 48% in grades 9-12 were even aware of the existence of the NCTM standards. The results revealed that it takes more than a list of standards to revise the teaching of math and that standards represent only one piece of puzzle that needs to be changed. As Costa (1993) noted,

> "...all aspects of a system are interlocking, all parts must change in accordance with the new paradigm. No one part can operate efficiently unless the other parts of the system work harmoniously" (p. 50).

Costa suggests that consideration needs to be given to the other pieces of the puzzle - textbooks, exams, classroom practices, and the interaction of different curriculums. There needs to be a balance so that the standards are responsive to "diverse beliefs and values

the immediate constituency and mechanisms to connect people along shared values" (O'Neil, 1993, p. 25).

Outcome-Based Education

Coinciding with the national movement to develop, implement, and assess standards was the rise of what became known as Outcome-Based Education (OBE) (Spady & Marshall, 1991). According to King and Evans (1991), OBE developed over several decades through the works of such noted scholars: Tyler's curriculum development model, Bloom's taxonomy of behavioral objectives, Glaser's criterion reference measurement, and the use of objectives by Spady, Johnson, and Gagne. OBE emerged in its present form during a decade when accountability concerns were at the forefront of educational reform. The essence of OBE calls for all students to demonstrate their mastery of a common set of requirements within varying periods of time. Spady (1991) stated that OBE is "a transformational way of doing business in education" (p. 2). This system is built on a series of building blocks or checkpoints along the way. Successful implementation is based upon four guiding principles:

(1) Clarity of focus - what we want the students to demonstrate

(2) Expanded opportunity - offer many different ways to learn and demonstrate;

(3) High expectations - all kids to do significant things at the end;

(4) Design down - design curriculum back from were you want your students to end up.

Spady and Marshall's early research of OBE revealed that three different models have come into existence: Traditional OBE, Transitional OBE, and Transformational OBE. For

each, they examined the theory as well as implementation within various settings as revealed in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2
Models of Out-Come Based Education by Spady & Marshall.

TRADITIONAL OBE	TRANSITIONAL OBE	TRANSFORMATIONAL OBE
Traditional nature of schooling;	Three stages of maturity: (1) Incorporation; (2) Integration, and (3) Redefinition.	Roots in future scanning procedures – strategic teams for strategic planning and designing models.
Begins with existing curriculum, curriculum based objectives are the basis for curriculum, instructional, and assessment alignment; demonstration is limited to individual or small segments of instruction.	Centers curriculum and assessment design around higher order competencies and exit outcomes rather than on particular kinds of knowledge and information; concerned with students' culminating capabilities at graduation time.	Embraces the 4 guiding principals, existing curriculum frameworks are set aside to address the issues of future-driven exist outcomes; focuses on guiding vision of the graduate.
Content and structure of the curriculum remains the same and does not reflect real life experiences; driven by the academically competent student.	Content gives priority to critical thinking, effective communication, technological applications and complex problem solving.	Think beyond the traditional curriculum thinking and program design.

In reviewing this table, it is evident that aspects of the curricular theories and procedural perspectives previously discussed are embedded within each of the models. The traditional OBE model demonstrates the ideas expressed by the Intellectual Traditionalists and the Social Behaviorists where procedures rely on logistics and knowledge and skill is delivered to the students in segmented intervals. The Transitional OBE model reflects more of the Experimentalists' viewpoint of a student centered approach that relies on both the logistics and deliberation to present curriculum and assessment through an interdisciplinary form of preparation. The Transformational OBE model, like the Conciliatorists, relies on the formation of teams consisting of the stakeholders to deliberate, design, implement and assess curriculum that will provide continuous

reinforcement so that all students achieve success. According to Spady, this OBE model requires a curriculum design that is based on the interrelationship of three kinds of outcomes: (1) Culminating, (2) Enabling, and (3) Discrete.

- Culminating Outcomes involve students in understanding and applying all prior learning in a variety of real life contexts, as well as, what the students will demonstrate at the end.
- Enabling Outcomes are the essential components of knowledge, competence, and behaviors/attitudes on which the Culminating Outcomes ultimately depend. Examples may include the teaching of math, communication skills, and citizenship.
- Discrete Outcomes are the isolated and disconnected content details and activities that do not support the Culminating Outcomes, but are self-serving.

The key to curriculum improvement under this outcome-based model is to "design down from the significant Culminating Outcomes to put in place the Enabling Outcomes on which they depend and to abandon and delete the Discrete Outcomes that are not significant Enabling components for the Culminating Outcomes (p.49). As Brandt (1992) states, the methodology of OBE "focuses on defining, pursuing, and assuring success with the same high level culminating outcomes for all"(p. 66). In essence, the success of outcome-based education refocuses how curriculum and assessments are designed and how instruction is delivered to ensure that student success throughout their schooling so that they may be able to demonstrate at the end what we want them to know and be able to do. Studies from states that implemented OBE will be highlighted in the next part of this review.

Common Core Knowledge

The emergence of the outcome-based initiative previously discussed prompted the introduction of the Core Knowledge Curriculum (Hirsch, 1993). In 1991, E.D. Hirsch's

literacy foundation decided to reflect the organization's commitment to building, by grade level, a core curriculum of knowledge that would be aligned with the skills and outcomes as designated at the state or local district level. It was to be built upon the assumption that students need to be introduced early on to a "solid, coherent foundation of shared knowledge" (p. 23). Its premise is that a curriculum built on meaningful content offers teachers the opportunity to teach and develop skills and strategies in various ways that meet the needs of all students. As Hirsch pointed out, "children from every ethnic and economic background should have access to a shared core of knowledge that is necessary to reading, understanding, and communication" (p. 27). Essential to the success of this curriculum improvement effort is the need for teachers to dialogue about their experiences across grade levels.

However, this reform initiative came under much criticism by educators who viewed "process" as just as important as content. Costa and Liebmann (1995) recalled the challenge outlined in the SCANS Report. It called for students to engage in real life experiences, and in doing so, requires "a shift from valuing knowledge acquisition to valuing knowledge production" (p. 24). The fourth and final initiative of educational reform to be discussed responds to this challenge.

Systemic Change

As noted earlier, America/Goals 2000 is the national master plan for breaking the mold to build schools for tomorrow (Kearns, 1993). It calls for the development of world class national content standards, learning outcomes for what students should know and be able to demonstrate upon graduation, and assessments that are linked to curriculum and instruction. In addition, this plan also stresses the importance of decreasing the dropout

rate, and preparing students for the workforce. Achieving such a goal requires a system of management that can bring together all of the stakeholders.

To accomplish this enormous task, the business community created the New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC), a nonprofit organization, to assist the adopting communities financially and in coordinating their improvement designs for changing their schools. Under this initiative, school systems would form design teams to develop a plan for changing their schools that would fit their own particular needs based upon the input from the community at large. Money for training, instructional materials, and technological hardware and software would be available to assist the communities during the planning and implementation stages. The implications for curriculum improvement under this reform effort are extensive, as well as expensive, because they require not only a procedural change in the way decisions are made, but once again, a shift in how curriculum is perceived, developed, implemented, and assessed.

Thus, the fourth wave of reform, "systemic change," was born. It involved developing a strategic plan that enables individuals from all aspects of the learning environment to participate in the curriculum improvement process. Through strategic planning, educators and the community are given the opportunity to define the vision of the world they want for children and then to find practical ways to achieve it.

As the buzz word for the nineties, systemic change is described as, "an effort to address several elements of the education system in a comprehensive fashion" (O'Neil, 1993). Advocates for systemic change believe that the education system itself must be rebuilt and can be through the dynamic interaction among all of the components. However, for many, systemic change remains unclear.

In an attempt to clarify its meaning, Holzman (1993) further defined systemic change by citing five ways in which the term in currently being used.

> SYSTEMIC *means working with school systems-district bureaucracies or state departments of education-to effect change*. Change must be vertical, beginning with existing bureaucratic structures. The focus is on district finance, board of education policies and relationships, and lines of authority in the central office.
>
> SYSTEMIC *means working with every school in the system.* In a horizontal sense, it implies working with all the schools in a district or state to effect change. Change must include every school in a system to be considered real change.
>
> SYSTEMIC *means working with every aspect of the school system.* In this instance, educational improvement considers the whole range of school issues, from student assessment to boards of education to school finance.
>
> SYSTEMIC *means systemic.* Horizontal and vertical structures must be considered. Anything less than a systematic approach will find the fabric of change unraveling at one end even as it is being woven at the other.
>
> SYSTEMIC *means fundamental change*. The nature of the present system that is in place must change. Extensive improvements cannot be done within the limits of the present system (p.18)

The identification of these five approaches of systemic change demonstrates the diversity, complexity, and often, confusing ways in which educational change is discussed. Each is limited in specificity, yet does provide information pertaining to the level or degree of the change, various aspects of the change, and who may be involved or affected by the change.

Anderson (1993) provided a more detailed explanation when she identified a matrix for systemic change in more practical and applicable terms (Figure 2.1). This matrix defines six stages of change and six key elements that will be the focus of implementing the change within a school system. She believed that this continuum will

provide individuals involved in the change process "with a common vantage point to communicate and make decisions about change" (p. 14).

STAGES OF CHANGE	FOCUS OF CHANGE
Maintain the old system	Vision
Awareness	Public/Political Support
Exploration	Networking
Transition	Teaching/Learning Change
Emergence of New Infrastructure	Administrative and Responsibilities
Predominance of the New System	Policy Alignment

Figure 2.1
Matrix for Systemic Change by Barbara Anderson

Though this matrix does not specifically refer to curriculum improvement, it does offer a way to shift from a traditional system of "business as usual" to one that emphasizes a nurturing environment, an interconnectedness between the old and the new, and that encourages shared decision making among its constituents. The main intent of this process is to provide educators with a conceptual picture of the process in order to develop a strategic plan for moving forward and encouraging meaningful and lasting change.

Kaufman and Herman (1991) proposed a framework for strategic planning which moved planners through four major clusters of activities: scoping, data collection, planning, and implementation and evaluation. As planners moved through the clusters, they had a choice from three levels of strategic planning - micro, macro, and mega. While there were three possible client groups, (1) the community and society, (2) the educational system, and (3) individual and small groups, Kaufman and Herman suggested that the first group be targeted. They felt that the "practical benefit of this choice is that educators,

often first defining the required societal payoffs, can make sensible decisions concerning curriculum, content, and methodology." In addition, they outlined a set of possible pitfalls that planners may encounter which could mean the difference between "creating just another dusty document and creating a revitalized educational system" (p. 4).

Wagner (1993) raised the level of discussion when he stated that the "real methodology" for systemic change beings and ends with "ongoing, authentic conversations about important questions" (p. 25). In addition to suggesting the use of business models, Wagner outlined five essential questions that he believes would assist design teams in improving schools. The questions include:

- What are the school's strengths and weaknesses?
- What is our vision and what are our core values for a better school?
- What are our priorities and strategies for change?
- What structures do we need to reach our goals?
- What new skills and resources will we need?

Using these broad, yet encompassing questions as the starting point for discussing reform, individuals involved in the process would be able to create a purposeful foundation and the parameters in which curriculum improvement could be addressed.

Likewise, as a result of a two-year study of the "design team" strategy of reform, Kearns (1993) reported that there are six elements upon which the plans focused.

(1) Standards and assessments must be aligned to ensure that what has been defined as important for students to know is sufficiently being assessed in order to measure progress.

(2) Curriculum and instruction will be in-depth, interdisciplinary, problem drive, and project-based with an emphasis on help students apply what they learn in school to experience outside of the classroom.

(3) Technology will play a major role in enhancing parent/teacher and teacher/student communication, and assist students in their learning.

(4) Enhancing school/teacher/parent relationships to ensure that students stay in school.

(5) Teachers need training, the tools and the flexibility to teach in the schools of the future.

(6) School management will be the responsibility of each school rather than central office management (p.773).

Thus, systemic change can be described as a giant puzzle that relies on all of its pieces to keep it together. To ensure that each piece of this puzzle is accounted for within designs for systemic reform, state departments are currently encouraging individual school districts to create a systemic plan for change that includes developing a curriculum framework for each discipline. The challenge for school districts is to dovetail the content standards developed for each knowledge discipline at the national level with the outcomes outlined within the Common Cores of Learning developed at the state level. The school districts will then be required to incorporate their own district outcomes based upon information gleaned from their design teams for what they want their students to know and be able to demonstrate upon graduation. The research that documents how school districts are coping with this task is limited at this time.

Summary

In closing, what remains clear is that at no other time in history have the procedures for curriculum improvement from national initiatives been so all encompassing in theory and practice, yet so blurred in providing specifics for practitioners on how to proceed. The next section will focus on the impact of these reform movements at the state level, and how in turn, they are translated into practice for all schools to follow.

State Initiatives for Curriculum Improvement

> Reformers have attempted to change public education from the top down with mandates to address a particular problem, with rules, procedures and standards generated to facilitate goal attainment, and with monitoring and evaluation to assess progress. What has been missing has been an appreciation of how such programs would actually affect the daily lives of students and teachers.
>
> (Sedlak, 1986, p. 185).

With the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellent in Education, 1983), the trend toward national and state mandated curriculum has come under fire, especially by local school districts (Brooks, 1991). This document signaled an alarm announcing that the American education system was in need of much improvement to stop the "rising tide of mediocrity." It prompted individual states to become the primary decision makers in promoting curriculum improvement.

This section of the literature review examines efforts at the state level to improve curriculum. The description is two-fold, in that, it reveals how selected states responded to the national initiatives for curriculum improvement presented in the previous section, and in turn, provides insight into their expectations for improving curriculum within local school systems.

State Efforts for Curriculum Improvement in the 80s

Klein (1994) believes that state control over curriculum improvement stems from several factors. Among them "are changes in the way public schools are funded, calls for greater accountability for educational tax dollars by the lay public, low student achievement on standardized tests and a general dissatisfaction with the curriculum being offered" (pg. 210). Having this authority paved the way for states to produce educational

regulations and policies whose sole aim was to define what curriculum ought to be and do for students and who should make curriculum decisions.

In his review of state efforts to reform the process of curriculum improvement, Cuban (1986) revealed that rather than suggest a new approach, all continue to reflect many of the characteristics found in traditional curriculum and instruction practices. What has become clear is that these characteristics have been "legitimized" and "strengthened" (Klein, 1991) with the shift of the decision making power to the state level.

Though limited in number, studies measuring the impact of state reform initiatives on curriculum improvement during the 80's decade reveal similar findings of incoherence and varied piecemeal approaches. The failure of these reform efforts was attributed to several factors. According to Furhman (1993), what resulted were "unclear signals about what schools should achieve, combined with a lack of a supportive policy structure for schools to try to improve." She further stated that these signals "weren't substantially connected and they were frequently contradictory" (p.9).

Lusi (1994) also concluded that: (1) existing policies frequently undermined attempts at improvement in other areas; (2) problems were addressed with quick fix solutions; and more importantly, (3) no careful examinations of the additive effects of the policies on schools were conducted. The following examples of state initiated curriculum improvement occurred in California, New York and Rhode Island during the 1980s. All support Lusi's conclusions, as each description reveals a lack of cohesiveness and the introduction of a variety of policies and goals that were at cross-purposes.

California

A prime example of state initiated curriculum reform occurred in California, where the state controlled most of the elements involved in curriculum decision making. The curriculum documents outlined the goals, objectives, the content to the taught, the recommended textbooks and the assessments that are to be administered. Due to the strong link between curriculum implementation and teacher evaluation, teachers were forced to follow and deliver the written curriculum, and were not encouraged to develop and implement their own ideas. Supporters of state mandated curriculum favored this approach because they felt it addressed the problems of inequity of education programs and ensured that all children would receive a quality education (Adler, 1982). Opponents believed that this approach had undermined the ability of administrators and teachers to become involved in curriculum work that would assist them in addressing the needs of their students.

However, in 1982, this plan was altered under the leadership of Bill Honig, Superintendent of Public Instruction of California, when he introduced the idea of curriculum frameworks as the foundation for coordinating change. This move from the traditional subject-matter framework prompted the creation of "conceptual roadmaps" that highlighted the latest educational initiatives, especially in the areas of teacher certification, student assessment, and accountability (Massell, 1994).

California's State Board of Education appointed state-wide Curriculum Framework and Criteria Committees to write and review drafts of the completed frameworks. The committees consisted of university faculty, teachers and other educators. The selection process for recruiting members focused on obtaining a balance of

people from different gender, racial or ethnic backgrounds and from different geographical regions. This process came under criticism by policymakers who believed that the committees were becoming primarily comprised of individuals from various interest groups. This practice was later altered with the adoption of a formal procedure giving "leading professionals" a priority in selection of those committees (California Department of Education, 1988). Thus, individuals who possessed extreme political or pedagogical beliefs were eliminated from the writing committees.

Upon completion of a draft, the document was distributed to a broader network of teachers and educational professionals for review and feedback which limited the inclusion of the average citizen in this process. The State Department of Education also conducted awareness sessions in various regions throughout the state to familiarize the general public with the frameworks that had been developed.

New York

Another example of state initiated reform was presented by Brooks (1991) in his review of the effects of curriculum centralization in the state of New York. Immediately following the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, the New York State Board of Regents issued a draft of its "Proposed Action Plan to Improve Elementary and Secondary Education Results in New York Schools" (1983). The plan placed "heavy emphasis on results or evidence of pupil performance than on techniques or instructional practice" (p. 151). Though use of a state-mandated syllabi was dropped in the final draft, local school districts were forced to adhere to the syllabi because of its stringent link to a comprehensive testing program. Further pressure was added due to the annual publication of test scores by the media.

Teachers and administrators at the local level received the proposal and subsequent implementation of this plan with much reservation. According to Brooks, the translation of this policy into practice resulted in a system which, "...values standardization of knowledge more than learning; the quality of education programs are judged by how well student populations score on state-mandated tests and teachers are forced to pay more attention to the test results; thus narrowing the range of and depth of learning; and that local curriculum development and curriculum review as standard practices have become essentially moribund" (p.161).

As in California, these factors placed considerable pressure on teachers to conform to a restrictive knowledge base and standards based on minimum competency. This policy forced them to teach to the test rather than use their own creativity to develop programs and explore the use of innovative teaching practices in the classroom.

Rhode Island

To a lesser degree, the state of Rhode Island also attempted to institute a Basic Education Program (BEP) in the late 80's to improve student learning (1987). Legislation was passed calling for the creation of a set of standards that would serve as a measure of minimum competency in each subject area. State dollars were made available for each of the 35 school districts to assist them in revising their curriculum, as well as to ensure compliance. Teams of 125 teachers and administrators from communities throughout the state were assembled on an as needs basis to visit each community for the purpose of assessing the entire curriculum and instructional program. Recommendations for improvements were made by the team in order to insure each district's compliance with the new set of standards.

Response by the individual communities to this attempt at state initiated curriculum improvement varied, and in the end, the results fell short of the mark intended by the legislature and State Department of Education. For many communities, the enticement of state dollars proved to be the incentive they needed to "revise" curriculum. Many communities jumped on the bandwagon and quickly began the process of revising many or all subject area curricular. In many cases, this was accomplished with little regard to establishing a format for developing and assessing curriculum. Several communities sat back and waited for the review team to tell them exactly what changes needed to be made and then proceeded to make them. Regardless, the visible changes became the publication of thickly bound curriculum guides whose objectives, activities, instructional strategies, and assessment practices reflected the state-mandated standards. This community, which will be highlighted in the case study of this paper, spent an exorbitant amount of time, money and manpower over the course of four years to create these documents, which for all intense and purposes have remained in closets and desk drawers.

Any immediate or eventual signs of improvement in teaching practices or student learning did not occur to the degree that was anticipated. The gap between policy and practice remained constant. The one positive aspect of this particular attempt at state-mandated curriculum reform lies with the communities whose curriculum revision practices were obsolete. This plan forced them to reflect upon their outdated instructional programs and practices and to make changes.

What occurred in the states of California, New York and Rhode Island mirrors the attempts made by other states to control reform efforts. In his study of centralizing curriculum at the state level, Pipho (1994) focused on “key events” that demonstrate the

source and amount of control that many states have over curriculum (pg. 68). The events he referred to include textbook adoption, curriculum guideline mandates and high school graduation requirements. The focus of the reform effort remained on external policy decisions that read well on paper, yet had little or a negative impact when attempts were made to put them into practice on the local level.

On a more positive note, Firestone (1989) concluded that some legislative efforts that were previously undertaken may in retrospect be considered "building blocks in longer term improvement efforts." Once such example is the legislative effort to standardize education in Rhode Island through the BEP served as the stepping stone through which additional reform measures were passed.

In 1987, with the BEP in place, the legislature of Rhode Island, in conjunction with the Board of Regents, passed the Literacy and Dropout Prevention Act. This aim of this state-mandated action was to lessen the dropout rate of high school students by providing students in grades K-3 with a solid foundation of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. The premise was that if students experienced a strong literacy program during their early schooling years, the dropout rate would lessen as they entered high school. Once again, state funds were made available to communities. However, in this instance, each community was given the opportunity to develop and implement its own plan of action that reflected the goals of the Literacy Act. The single most essential factor of this act was the importance placed on enhancing the professional development of teachers. For the first time, the re-education of the veteran teaching force in the latest instructional strategies and educational research was viewed as the catalyst for improving student learning. In addition to the State Department of Education offering seminars and

workshops during the day for administrators and after school for teachers, many communities found innovative ways to assist their teachers in redefining what and how students would be taught.

As a proponent of this movement to enhance teacher development and student learning, it was disheartening to witness the slow disintegration of what proved to be a truly worthwhile program. As the state funds dwindled with each passing year, so did the ability on the part of the communities to continue to implement the plans they so carefully devised. At this point in time, the only semblance of the original programs that exist may be what has continued to be funded by the individual communities. Evidence to support the continuation of this program by the state was too slow in being realized and as in many instances of programs federally or state funded, the financial support eroded or was invested in a new program. The test results did not reveal the impact of the program in a timely fashion which made many individuals doubt the validity of their investment. Little thought, if any, was given to the mismatch between what was being taught, as well as, the manner in which it was being taught, and what standardized tests were assessing. However, the lingering effects of this movement can be seen in the amount of good literature that is being used by teachers to introduce numerous reading and writing strategies and the increased interest on the part of students to read and model their writing after some of their favorite authors.

State Efforts for Curriculum Improvement in the 90s

The situations previously cited support Massell's (1994) belief that "the reform efforts of the 80's did little to decrease the conflicting policy demands that impact schools" (pg. 85). In an effort not to relive the mistakes of the past, many states pushed for

"systemic reform" (Smith & O'Day, 1991, p. 233) to address the current demands of their education system. The underlying belief of this approach was that a change in one aspect of the system results in changes in other parts of the system. The system would be better served if all of its various components are aligned to achieve a common vision or goal. However, as discussed in the previous section, systemic reform can be interpreted and implemented in different ways by the individuals involved in the curriculum improvement process. Such is the case with the interpretation and implementation of Outcome Based Education in the nineties.

In 1992, Evans & King reported that the existing evidence on the implementation of Outcome-Based Education was "perceptual, anecdotal, and small scale." Two years later, their research revealed that there continued to be "little solid ground on which to base a reform movement" (1994, p.12). The reasoning behind their conclusion was based upon the data collected from studies conducted with the states of New York, Utah, Missouri, and Minnesota. They found that the three OBE approaches: Traditional, Transitional, and Transformational, identified in the previous section by Spady and Marshall, either already existed within their present mode of operation within a system or that they presented some states with the challenge to create a whole new system. In addition, they also discovered that OBE presented a challenge when it came to documenting any measure of its impact on student learning.

New York

In New York, Albert Mamary, Superintendent of the Johnson City, New Central School District developed the Outcomes-Driven Developmental Model (ODDM). This model was designed to coordinate and align all aspect of the life of a school in pursuit of

desired outcomes (Vichery, 1990). This was the only total school improvement model that received the backing of the National Diffusion Network, which in turn helped train 17 states in its use and implementation.

The foundation of ODDM is the shared belief that decision making involves discussion deliberation and participation by all members of the professional staff. Research reveals most decisions are made by individuals within a school may seem reasonable, though in reality, they conflict with another program or a goal that the school is trying to accomplish. To temper this misalignment, the staff must consider a broad and inclusive framework for assessing the impact of choices when decisions are at stake. The ODDM assists the decision making process in outlining three categories of responsibilities and support - Administrative, Community, and Teacher, each of which requires careful planning and consideration to ensure that all three are aligned, mutually supported, and student centered.

The data collected from New York pertaining to the progress made as a result of implementing ODDM revealed that the students in a lower-middle community who once ranked 14 out of 14 on standardized tests, with 45-50% at/above grade level in reading and math, showed an increase by 1978. Their percentage rose to 70, and by 1984, it was between 80-90%. The New York State Regents exams also revealed that in 1986, 77% of the Johnson City students received diplomas compared with the 43% statewide and the 59% countrywide.

Utah

In Utah, three questionnaires were developed and sent to district, school and individuals to assess their attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and the perceived effects of the

progress being made toward implementing Outcome-Based Education and the ODDM. In addition to requesting achievement data, three hundred board members, administrators, teachers, support staff, and students were interviewed. The data revealed that:

(1) the implementation of outcome-based education required a complete system of restructuring over a significant period of time,

(2) outcome-based education was implemented in districts that adopted the ODDM model,

(3) the adoption takes place in elementary more than secondary schools and in smaller districts rather than larger districts,

(4) districts with more complete implementation also appear to demonstrate higher student achievement and experienced the most success.

Missouri

Missouri's Statewide Projects for Improving Student Achievement (Cohen & Hyman, 1991, and Guskey & Block, 1991), otherwise known as the "Instructional Management System," called for three key components. They included (1) a statewide curriculum, (2) three state-endorsed instructional programs (mastery learning, outcome-based, cooperative), and (3) criterion reference test (Missouri Mastery Achievement Test) that measures the curriculum outcomes. The results revealed that students' scores significantly rose beginning in 1986-87. In 1987, 40-60% of the students ranked in the bottom two quintiles as compared to 1989, when 70-90% ranked in the top two quintiles with 50 to 75% in the highest.

Minnesota

The Department of Education Office of Educational Leadership in Minnesota worked in ten project sites across the state from 1989-1991 to determine the effectiveness

of OBE in improving student learning. Interviews were conducted with parents, teachers, students and administrators to determine effects of the changes as a result of transformational OBE. The results reported from 37 schools revealed that:

(1) 49% reported more or better learning,

(2) 43% reported increased student involvement, and

(3) 35% reported different effects for different types of students.

The last category, different types of students, suggested that OBE works for the average/unmotivated learner if given the time and opportunities to succeed with regular classroom instruction. It had negative prescriptions for students who are usually at the top. The conclusions gleaned from this study were that (1) ODDM works and can be adapted into traditional systems of operation, (2) Mastery Learning/ODDM are effective in the classroom and building levels; and (3) Mastery Learning/Minnesota's OBE benefited the lower achieving students and is questionable for high achievers. The effect of the transformational model remains to be seen.

Sambs & Schenkat (1990) reported on one district involved in restructuring using the OBE model. Their early research revealed that the district had been "doing all the right stuff" with no results. They had adopted site-based management in 1984 and had developed a matrix model for decision making. Each school had outlined themes or priorities to work on with the staff members through professional development. Though they had all the pieces in place and had conceptualized a vision, the status quo did not change. In studying the situation, the district realized that they needed to closely examine how all the pieces fit together – their beliefs, common practices, and the role of site-based management in the schools and district-side. What they found was that they needed to

restructure many dimensions and involve many of the stakeholders in the restructuring process. The results were four clusters of activity – (1) communicating vision/beliefs both internally and externally; (2) developing successful pilots of OBE implementation; (3) empowering the staff; and (4) building the capacity of school sites to control the conditions of success. They discovered that the key to successful improvement was having "a clear purpose to drive restructuring in order to change beliefs, conditions, practices, and traditions" (p.75).

As noted in the previous section of this literature review, the premise of the Outcome-Based initiative gave rise to the creation of the Common Core of Learning. According to Hirsch's (1993) research, "Students need to share common reference points to enable everyone to understand and learn; that high academic skill is based upon broad general knowledge, and that common content leads to higher school morale, as well as better teaching and learning" (p. 23). With these reference points in mind, the states of Vermont, South Carolina, Kentucky, Virginia, Maine, Oregon and Rhode Island attempted to outline a common core of learning which would act as the umbrella and guide to encourage individual school districts to engage in curriculum improvement. In two cases, this initiative led to the creation of the CIM or Certificate of Initial Mastery.

Vermont

In 1991, the Vermont Department of Education unveiled its Common Core of Learning (CCL), a composite of five reports sequentially produced outlining efforts to set student standards. The state instituted a grassroots approach to agenda setting by including a broad cross section of lay citizens and education professionals. The forty member writing committee (the Common Core Corps) set up by the Vermont Department

of Education consisted of parents, students, business leaders, and school professionals. The review and feedback process followed along the same course as Massell (1992) points out when he stated that "it is important to the legitimacy of state efforts in Vermont, which has a long tradition of direct democracy and citizen involvement in government" (p. 132). More than forty focus groups were held involving 2, 000 people who were asked to respond to three questions:

> (1) What skills, knowledge and attitudes will learners need to be successful in the 21st century?
>
> (2) What programs exist now that are in harmony with your vision?
>
> (3) What can schools, communities, and businesses do together today that would make a difference? (Vermont Department of Education 1991, p.18).

The first report identified "what students should know and be able to do" and coordinated with the state's new portfolio assessments to be developed by teachers across the state. The additional reports would explore successful learning environments, model instructional programs, and ways to organize to achieve the core student outcomes. This first draft of the document offered "a relatively abstract level of detail on skill-based competencies under the rubric of communication, reasoning and problem solving, citizenship, well-being, and global stewardship" (Massell, 1994, p. 93). However, it came under severe criticism from teachers, the press, the State Board of Education, and others for its lack of connection to the academic disciplines. Thus, the decision was made to organize the skills under three academic clusters: History and Social Sciences; Arts and Literature; and Science, Mathematics, and Technology. The decision to develop curriculum frameworks was made and they were eventually added to the set of reports.

South Carolina

Massell's research on state-led educational reform also documented the use of curriculum frameworks within South Carolina and Kentucky. The frameworks developed by South Carolina's State Department of Education contained student performance standards, different instructional strategies that are specific to the diverse student population, and also criteria for selecting instructional materials. Like California, the members of the framework writing teams were comprised of educated professionals with expertise in the field. However, South Carolina's (SDE) had much more influence over the selection of curriculum writing teams, as well as to a Curriculum Review Panel, which functioned like California's Curriculum Commission. A key aspect of South Carolina's model was the creation of a Curriculum Congress, an advisory board set up to ensure the involvement of the lay public and school professionals in the curriculum improvement process. This board would interact with and advise the framework writing teams on a continuous basis. Another important feature of the process South Carolina's improvement plan was the process used to advertise the draft frameworks in an effort to increase public involvement. A large-scale campaign targeted the small businesses, textbook publishers, educators on all levels and positions throughout the state, as well as, broadcasts on the radio and television.

Kentucky

Kentucky's involvement with standard setting began in 1989 when the governor formed the Council on School Performance Standards to outline what students should know and be able to do. The Council appointed committees of educators to develop six broad goals that are primarily skill based to bridge the gap between student activities and

school and the workplace. This move toward skill based learning was in response to comments from the general public during the focus group interviews that were held throughout the state. Once the goals were drafted, the focus groups met again to review the draft and provide feedback. As a result, the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) was passed by the General Assembly in 1990 establishing a systemic reform plan. The plan designated a series of learner outcomes for the six goals that would lay the foundation for the creation of a state curriculum framework and student performance assessments. The task of developing a curriculum framework was under the direction of Kentucky's State Department of Education who established seven writing teams with fifteen professional educators. The teams, comprised of teachers, university faculty, administrators, and instructional supervisors, were selected from over 450 applicants. The team members were selected based upon their responses to issues that were pertinent to the philosophy expressed by the KERA. While the initial plan called for a broad review and feedback about the draft framework, the lack of funds prohibited it from being copied and distributed on a large scale. As a result, each school district received one copy to share with its constituents.

Three years later, Steffy (1993) reported that the mandated top-down systemic change that had been in place had resulted in the creation of world class standards for what students should know and be able to do. With 75 learning outcomes for graduating seniors to attain and a four level assessment system, the Kentucky Department of Education felt they were well on their way toward "emphasizing the developmental nature of learning." KERA also included provisions for building level rewards and sanctions based upon whether a school attains its potential or falls below a baseline score.

In addition to these initiatives, the reforms also included the development of a primary school program that "is based upon the belief that all children can learn, although they do not learn at the same rate or in the same way" (p. 44). Using educational strategies that promote cooperative learning, teaming, integrated learning, and the use of manipulatives to teach math, this non-graded primary school would extend from primary to fourth grade to insure that students are given the time to learn. With these top-down initiatives in place, accountability rests with the individual schools and the teachers. Bottom-up restructuring has begun with the implementation of in-service training sessions to prepare teachers, principals, and administrators for the mandated changes.

Virginia

Bradford & Steff (1993) studied Virginia's Common Core of Learning that was developed by the Virginia State Superintendent and the School Board of Education under the "World Class Education." At the time of their study, the program was in the second year of a ten year plan. The plan, which was developed by state specialists, local educators and national consultants, provided school systems with several suggested curriculum innovations that they may wish to voluntarily change.

The Core, consisting of thirty-eight outcomes to be performed at various levels, identified which capabilities students needed to succeed in the future. The plan was based on the premise that its outcomes and fundamental skills would transform learning because they would teach performances required for life. Teachers were involved in designing assessments to gain a deeper understanding of what needed to be taught and how to teach it best. Regional centers were established for teachers to learn how to design their own

classrooms based upon performance assessments that focused on every student and supported the Core Curriculum of Learning and their school curriculum.

The plan was implemented in ten to fifteen elementary project sites with the understanding that change was not mandated. State funding for participating sites involved one year for planning, and one year for changing and sharing their experiences with other schools in the area. Implementation would be accomplished on an individual basis within each school. Eventually the plan would move to the middle school and then to the high school.

Maine

Maine's Common Core of Learning was the focus of a study by Gaidimas and Walters (1993). Developed by a representative group of educators, community members, and business people, this state's reform effort attempted to move away from traditional subject lines toward integrated frameworks for curriculum and instruction. It was based on a set of outcomes distributed among four "transdisciplinary" categories: (1) Human Record, (2) Reasoning and Problem Solving, (3) Communication, and (4) Personal and Global Stewardship (p. 31). The intent was to use the CCL as the starting point and in turn, required changes in instructional practices, assessments, and scheduling. Outside agencies were hired to help build collaboration and ensure ownership of the reform effort. Through funding from the Danforth Foundation, Pratt and Whitney provided training in team building and problem solving. Additional assistance was provided by members of the Southern Maine Partnership (a John Goodlad site network for renewing schools) and fifteen consultants from the State Department of Education. Their goal was to develop support for change by:

(1) providing copies to teachers of the work that was being accomplished,

(2) having four release day afternoons for district-wide discussion,

(3) dividing teachers/support staff into cross grade, cross discipline groups of 15,

(4) identifying the knowledge, skills, and attitudes graduating students should possess, and

(5) adoption by school committee with the superintendent setting implementation for within 5 years (p. 32).

According to Gaidimas & Walters, the early stages were a struggle in deciding how to approach the task to ensure that teachers reached a level of comfort with each other and the task at hand. The afternoon sessions to develop the outcomes began in January of 1992, with teachers given the choice of which meetings to attend. They then formed committees and set up a work schedule for the spring and summer. With the decision to outline eight content areas, the committees created 5 to 8 outcomes for each areas and assessment standards for grades 4, 8, and 11. The result was a combination of skills, benchmarks and standards. The end task would involve multiple outcomes in order to provide information about students' proficiency in several subject areas. In January 1993, with the content outcomes completed, the committees narrowed down the number from 42 to possibly 10-15 and sharing their work. The impact of this initiative in Maine has yet to be determined.

Oregon

The state of Oregon began its reform initiative in July 1991 with the passage of the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century. Like the previous states, this act was founded on the belief that all students need to learn and perform at high levels. To accomplish this mission, Astudents would be offered a rigorous, relevant curriculum and

supported by a performance-based assessment system that provides continuous feedback regarding individual progress. Their goal was to begin in 1997 to award a Certificate of Initial Mastery to students at about grade 10 or age 16 who achieved the expected standards for performance (CIM Assessment System, 1994). A Task Force was formed in December 1991 to develop the CIM outcomes and extended definitions which would be the basis for designing and implementing various programs to support student learning. The Student Performance Assessment Network (SPAN) was later formed to design CIM performance tasks and a scoring system. The performance tasks would vary in the amount of time they would take to complete and provide students with opportunities to learn and produce evidence of their achievements. When both students and teachers believed the quality of students' work met the CIM standards, a portfolio of evidence would be submitted. According to its developers, the CIM system differs from traditional system in three ways:

(1) It enables students to learn while they are being assessed, capitalize on their strengths, and know with absolute certainty why their work meets, exceeds, or falls short of expected standards.

(2) The CIM design connects curriculum, instruction, and assessment at a fundamental level.

(3) The CIM outcomes and extended definitions provide clearly defined learning targets for students.

This program has been showcased around the United States by its developers. They have provided other states with a packet of materials which outlines their reform initiative. The developers believe that it is a "living resource" that will be refined in the coming year as teachers use them with students.

Rhode Island

A new era in state initiated educational reform began in Rhode Island as a result of the enactment of America 2000 (now Goals 2000) and the plans drafted by the 21st Century Commission and the Rhode Island Skills Commission to restructure the state's education system. At the state level, educators were also greatly influenced by the improvement plan created and implemented in Oregon. As a result, two levels of curriculum improvement emerged. The first was an invitation to school districts that were willing to work with the Rhode Island Skills Commission to develop a Certificate of Initial Mastery. This certificate would "define high educational standards for students; design a performance-based assessment system; develop new career educational programs for students who do not pursue a four-year college degree; assist employers seeking to redesign work to be more productive and increase the skills of their employees; and reorganize existing employment and training programs into a coherent system that is based on customers' needs" (RI Skills Commission, 1993, p.1).

The second level of improvement called for the citizens of the state to establish learner goals and high standards of performance for all of the students under the guise of a common core. In preparation for developing the Common Core of Learning (1994), the Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education convened Rhode Island's Common Core of Learning Team, comprised of nearly 100 parents, educators, civic, business, and corporate leaders. Together they researched the issues and conducted focus groups around the state that participated in the development of a survey. This survey was printed in five languages and distributed throughout the state. It asked one question:

> What should all young adults in Rhode Island know and be able to do to meet the responsibilities and challenges of the 21st Century?"

The results of this survey were published in the document, *Developing a Common Core: A Report On What We Heard* (September 1994). It focused on four major goals: Communication, Problem Solving, Body of Knowledge, and Responsibility. These goals formed the basis for developing more explicit curriculum documents, and were therefore, "intended to guide schools and classroom teachers in the design of curriculum and instruction."

The Department of Education, with input from educators around the state, business representatives, and lay people, created curriculum frameworks for the areas of English Language Arts (1994), Mathematics (1995), and Science (1995). The transfer of these documents into practice within a local school system is discussed in Chapter Four in conjunction with the in-depth study that was conducted of curriculum improvement within a local school system.

In closing, a study conducted in 1993 by Pechman and Laguarda surveyed the status of curriculum improvement throughout the United States. Their report revealed that forty-five states were in the process of developing and implementing new curriculum frameworks. The frameworks included some or all of the components: content standards, student outcomes, performance standards and new assessments. Fuhrman and Massell (1992) also reviewed the trend toward standard setting and found that "at a minimum, two or more components of the policy system - assessment, textbooks and instructional materials, or staff development are keyed to a common set of curricular and instructional standards" (p. 85).

Summary

The data pertaining to state initiated reform efforts revealed that the difference between the state curriculum improvement initiatives of the past and the current attempts at standard setting lies in the approach that is being used to build consensus among the practitioners within the educational hierarchy. Thus, the issues for systemic reform lie with the operational procedures that must be in place before discussions can occur and decisions can be made pertaining to curriculum improvement.

The last part of this literature review will discuss specific operational procedures for curriculum decision making that have been suggested by educators and researchers of curriculum improvement process. Within the varied procedures to be discussed are prime examples of the use of logistics and deliberation in making decisions at the local school level. Insight into the role that principals and teachers play in the curriculum improvement process will also shared to assist the researcher in analyzing the data collected through the two strands of inquiry.

Theoretical and Procedural Aspects of Curriculum Decision Making

> Curriculum decision making takes place in a complex political melieu. It requires expertness, political awareness, and a continuing dialogue among the decision makers for resolution of conflicts and agreement on major goals.
> (Unruh, 1983, p. 99)

Apple's (1990) research revealed that decisions have often been made within an atmosphere of conflict and compromise. In many cases, the politics involved in curriculum improvement and the varied decision making practices generated a new set of extenuating circumstances for individuals to confront and resolve (Carlson, 1988). This result is that a vast array of proposed recommendations and implemented programs have

fallen short of their goal. The underlying premise behind their failure may lie in the hierarchical bureaucratic approach whose reliance on federal and state legislation to solve any education crisis results in the creation off "outside-of-school remedies for inside-of-school problems" (Barth, 1990, p. 15). These attempts promoted an image of uniformity and common purpose through the delegation of guidelines and outcomes, which in the end did not necessarily guarantee meaningful and successful change. The establishment of polices and operational procedures designates personnel roles and responsibilities, that in turn, may mold the beliefs and attitudes of the individuals who participate in the decisions involved in curriculum improvement.

This section of the literature review examines the decision making process involved in curriculum improvement. It presents several approaches that have been proposed and implemented by scholars to study the various levels of decision making, who is involved in the process, what decisions get made, and most important, how decisions are made. Research pertaining to the extent of principal and teacher involvement in making decisions that influence curriculum improvement will be discussed. Finally, an attempt will be made to identify any problems that may emerge as a result of their participation in decisions to improve curriculum.

Decisional Domains

Johnson's (1990) research of teachers in their workplace contributed to a definition for decision making which reflects its multidimensional nature. She stated that, "Decision making takes place in a set of loosely connected domains where different groups of participants set agendas and control the outcomes" (p. 182). Scholars who conducted the early studies documented the existence of the domains that Johnson alludes

to and how they contribute to the multi-dimensional nature of decision making (Alutto & Belasco, 1972; Mohrman, Cooke, & Mohrman, 1978; Goodlad & Associates, 1979; Griffin, 1979; Eisner, 1985; Bacharah, Bamberger, Conley, & Bauer, 1990; Klein, 1991). These studies have their origin in the work of Parsons (1960) who outlined three decisional domains in which the majority of the decisions fall.

For example, the *Institutional Domain* focuses on decisions that are related to the adaptation of policies established by the city, state, or national government. The *Managerial Domain* includes decisions that may involve budgetary concerns, the purchasing of resources and materials, or the hiring of professional personnel. The *Technical Domain* focuses on decisions that are directly related to the production and maintenance of programs, appropriate instructional methods, or the development of a system-wide curriculum document.

In 1972, Alutto and Belasco used Parson's decision domains to identify twelve decisions that support the technical and managerial domains within educational organizations. Mohrman, Cooke, and Mohrman (1978) also drew upon the decisional domains in conducting their study of actual and desired participation in curriculum decision making. Their findings raised concerns pertaining to the earlier investigations of decision making which they believe failed to consider the content of the decisions. Rather, the emphasis was directed toward the degree to which teachers and principals participated as opposed to how they felt about the decisions they were asked to make. In focusing on attitudes, this group of researchers found that the individuals who responded to their questionnaire indicated that their participation in different decisional domains was "not simply related to the degree to which they participated, but also to the types of decisions

in which they participated" (p. 26). Their research encouraged others to examine participation in decision making through different decisional domains.

Bacharach, Bamberger, Conley, & Bauer (1990) conducted a survey of 842 elementary and 689 secondary teachers through a multi-domain evaluative approach. Their findings reiterated what had been stated more than a decade before; specifically, that "individuals attach different meanings to participation" (p. 132), which in turn, "stresses the importance of delineating strategically the specific decision domains that teachers may become involved in." (p. 164). In addition to revealing information pertaining to decision making on various levels and the individuals involved, these scholars believed that the use of a multidimensional domain structure would also measure the attitudes of the individuals toward their participation in the process. They were able to demonstrate the utility of the structure first posed by Alutto and Belasco, as well as identify four additional decisional domains. While their multi-dimensional evaluative approach proved beneficial in determining teacher' desired and actual levels of participation, it also reiterated the fact that little had changed over the years in this area.

In *A Study of Schooling*, Goodlad and his associates (1979) employed the use of domains in the development of a conceptual framework for collecting, organizing, and interpreting curriculum decision making in school settings. Similar to the researchers previously discussed, they too examined the multidimensional nature of the decision making process. Their intent was to draw attention "to the study of curriculum planning processes and products, to the ongoing nature of praxis in all domains, and to the delineation and understanding of the phenomenon" (p. 50).

Their framework outlined four domains: *societal, institutional, instructional*, and *personal or experiential*, from which to gather data pertaining to the "curriculum decisions that are made, the kinds of decisions made there, and the persons or collective bodies of persons making them" (p. 13-14). Goodlad and his associates were able to define each domain by providing specific information pertaining to the decisions and to roles and responsibilities of the individuals. They also were able to develop a visual representation of their conceptual framework to identify four domains:

> The social level of decision making refers to those decisions made by persons or agencies removed in time and place from the individual learner. Examples include boards of education, state departments of education and federal agencies who are concerned with educational policy and procedures.
>
> The institutional level of decision making refers to school faculties, central office persons, curriculum committees, and others in the school system working together within the framework provided by the societal decisions.
>
> The instructional level of decision making refers to individual teachers, or teams of teachers responsible for identifiable students, deciding along or with students what shall occur in specific educative settings.
>
> The personal or experiential domain of decision making involves that which students experience and how they might participate effectively in the decision making process.

In conjunction with this research, Griffin (1979) conducted a study for a two month period to determine the degree to which this conceptual framework accurately reflected the reality of the decision making process, the various levels of decisions, and the decision makers. Five school systems were selected to participate based on their interest, structure and different organizational and demographic characteristics. The 407 persons who participated in the study were classified as a societal, an institutional, or an instructional decision maker. To assist the decision makers in understanding and relating to the

decisions in practical terms, forty-three concrete examples of curricular decisions were provided in the form of a questionnaire. The respondents were directed to indicate the role he or she played in making each of the decisions; whether they acted independently or unilaterally; and if they did not participate in a decision, then who was responsible for making the decision.

The responses indicated that societal level decisions are made by societal level individuals and instructional level decisions are made by instructional level individuals. A discrepancy emerged with regard to the institutional level decisions that were not made by the institutional level individuals, but in fact, did not appear to be specifically made by any one of the three levels. Out of the 25 institutional decisions, only two were made by societal level persons and nine were made by instructional level individuals. Griffin's work was instrumental in documenting key variables that impact the decision making process. They included:

1. Size and organizational complexity appear to affect the degree to which school districts are reflective of the levels of decision making tested by the study.

2. Teachers participate extensively in making curricular decisions and, more than any of the other positions studied, appear to make decisions consistently more unilaterally.

3. Decisions regarding matters of organization appear to receive the least attention of the four types of decisions considered by the study.

4. Perceptions of decision making appear to be in according with decision-making behavior as reported by respondents. (p. 84).

Griffin noted that this framework appeared to be reflective of practice at the societal and instructional levels, demonstrating the "exact correspondence between the decisions placed at these levels and those persons who make the decisions" (p.85). On the other

hand, this framework offered very little information of the institutional level of decision making. To alleviate this discrepancy, Griffin suggested that the framework be reformatted so that the decisions are placed at the appropriate domain or level, and in turn, may alleviate the confusion and a potential problem as individuals engage in the process of improving curriculum.

Klein also (1991) continued the study of curriculum decision making that she began under the leadership of Goodlad with her adaptation of two conceptual frameworks (Goodlad, Klein, Tye, 1979; Goodlad, 1979). Her goal was to construct a framework to provide a systemic way of examining who makes what types of curriculum decisions. The conceptual framework in Table 2.3 on page 66 is two-dimensional and identifies seven possible levels of curriculum decision making and nine essential curriculum elements about which decisions must be made. Klein pointed out that the perspectives or levels of decision making are not in hierarchical order, but "in the degree of remoteness or closeness to the student, the major focus of curriculum decisions" (pg. 25).

This framework is descriptive in nature in that it allows one to describe and analyze what could be a pattern of curriculum decision making. Klein stated that although this framework reflects only one way of collecting data about curriculum decision making, it is essential because it identifies the tasks and suggests who makes what type of curriculum decision. She believes that this framework will assist curriculum developers in "in sorting out the confusion and contradiction in decision making by identifying incompatible decisions made at different levels about the same element and incompatible decisions made about the different elements within any given curriculum" (p. 39). This

framework also reflects the complexity of curriculum decision making and suggests one way to systematically identify and address problems that may emerge.

Table 2.3
Framework for Curriculum Decision Making by M. Frances Klein, 1991

PERSPECTIVES OR LEVELS OF DECISION MAKING	CURRICULUM ELEMENTS								
	Goals Objectives Purposes	Content	Materials Resources	Teaching Activities	Strategies	Evaluation	Grouping	Time	Space
Academic									
Societal									
Formal									
Institutional									
Instructional									
Operational									
Experiential									

Eisner (1985) also provided a lens from which to study the multidimensional nature of curriculum decision making. His "Scale and Scope of Curriculum Decisions" in Fig. 2.2 on page 67 notes the administrative level of decision making, as well as the conceptual level within the classroom. He proposed that the process of curriculum decision making should consider the decisions that are made within the classroom setting between the teacher and students, as well as the decisions that have yet to be made based upon external influences. The focus on the teacher and student as viable decision makers grounds his framework within the conciliatorists' orientation previously described. His framework received further attention by Clark (1988) who conducted a study with Goodlad of a school system that planned to add the ninth grade to the high school level.

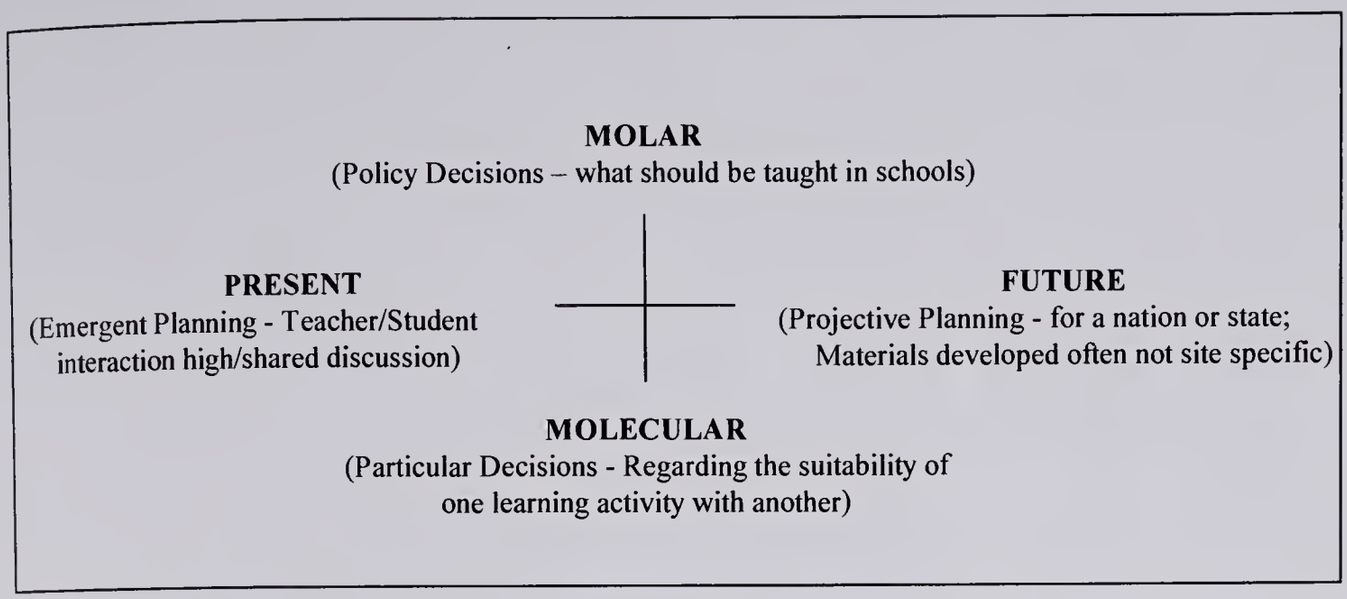

Figure 2.2
Scale & Scope of Curriculum Decision Making by Elliott Eisner, 1985

Clark identified ten different categories of decision makers that had considerable influence on the decisions that needed to be made for this transition to take place. The decision makers included individuals of internal and external influence. He identified the internal individual as those closest to the students and the learning environment, such as individual teachers, teacher groups, and central administration. The individuals that would be considered having external influence included the public, political leaders, textbook and test publishers, the media, higher education personnel and professional organizations.

In the end, Clark found that that no one group dominated the decision making process, but that there were consequences to having the involvement of so many different participants, especially individuals who were too far removed from the classroom. Consequently, his findings indicated that too much attention was paid to developing techniques and strategies through external influence. He suggested that a plan was needed to improve the process of decision making so that the focus was on the school and classroom and the decision making was in the hands of the individuals who will be most

affected by them. Clark stressed that the concentration should be on "enabling the school while the school enables the teachers" (p. 193).

Martin, Saif and Theil conducted a study in 1987 to examine curriculum development practices throughout the United States. Their findings revealed that two thirds of the 200 districts surveyed reported have a master plan for improving curriculum. In most cases, the Assistant Superintendent was in charge with some districts reporting guidance by a Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Instructional professions were found to have the most involvement in the improvement process, followed by the Curriculum Director, the Assistant Superintendent, and principals. Parents and students had the least amount of influence. Most important, their study revealed that:

(1) There was no relationship between the extent of teacher involvement in curriculum development and the size of the school system, the type of setting, the number of minority students or the amount of money spent on students.

(2) The nature and degree of parent involvement varied among schools; only those schools that supported their participation showed a high degree of involvement.

(3) A significant number of principals were involved, though not as much as teachers (p. 48).

Monson & Monson (1993) proposed the Curriculum Inquiry Model that outlined parameters for teacher choice and focused decision making. The model first posed the fundamental questions: (1) What should be learned? (2) How should it be learned? and (3) How should it be assessed? Then it delineated the individual and collective decisions and who is responsible for making them. They documented the use of this model in one public school system where it assisted the administration in defining teachers' roles and decision making parameters. The results indicated that though the process was received with much

"ambiguity and uncertainties," overall, the teachers were encouraged to make informed decisions in determining the curriculum.

As the previous research indicates, the identification of external and internal domains has enabled researchers to study the various aspects of the decision making process involved in curriculum improvement. Clark's research offered some information pertaining to the "act of decision making" and the importance of the process that the individuals were involved in to make the decisions. However, most studies gave little credence to how participating individuals arrived at their decisions and the amount of consideration that was given to the impact these decisions would have on students and their learning. As noted in the first part of this literature review, Schwab's (1970) introduction of "deliberation" and "practical" was a major factor that influenced other researchers to examine and discuss the procedural aspects of decision making. Schwab was interested in small groups, limiting participation to ten to twelve within an informal setting to encourage risk taking. He believed that within these settings "good decisions will be made because they will be taken in view of an exhaustive and honest appraisal of needs, possibilities and criteria for choice" (p. 50).

Walker (1979) used deliberation as the focus of a detailed case study of three projects that he conducted in conjunction with the Kettering Project headed by Elliot Eisner. Through observations and recorded discussions of participants involved in curriculum planning, Walker's research established two main points. The first is that curriculum deliberation is not a random act as it is often perceived, but a structured process and task relevant. He suggests that principles and methods can be introduced to guide the process of decision making and raise the level of effective problem solving. The

second point established by this case study revealed that it is possible to analyze the nature of deliberation. The steps for analysis involve stating the problems, defining the area within which solutions to the problems could be sought, and justifying the arguments and judgments that guided the choice that was made among the various solutions that were proposed.

Hawthorne (1990) also referred to Walker's use of the "deliberative pattern" in his study of the collaborative decision making practices of teachers and principals. Through his curriculum development courses, his graduate students observed and analyzed actual curriculum groups involved in decision making. Upon completion, the students reflected upon their observations and notes and then provided the groups with feedback about their behavior. Hawthorne reported two important observations that were apparent to the graduate students: (1) the curriculum groups' perceptions about the decisions that they thought they had made; and (2) the data describing the decisions showed a wide discrepancy (p. 285). Upon reflection, the students identified several factors that they felt had an impact on the groups' perceptions and the discrepancy in the data. They included:

(1). Interests and academic abilities were dominant;

(2). Societal needs; and

(3). Decisions were not based on a vision for design of a total curriculum under development.

Hawthorne cautioned that these findings are the result of an attempt to analyze the curriculum decision making practices, that is, the act of decision making. His research clarifies Reid's statement pertaining to the nature of deliberation; that this "approach demands that we test such assumptions, and inquire whether curriculum problems may not

sometimes be problems of administration, or personal relationships, of ideologies, of community life or of democratic participation" (p. 55).

Summary

This section of the literature review presented research that documents the different approaches that have been proposed and used to collect data pertaining to curriculum decision making. The research reveals the multidimensional nature of curriculum decision making through the identification of decisional domains. Within these domains, researchers have gathered data about the various curriculum decisions, the kinds of decisions that are made, and the persons or groups that are involved in the process. Consideration was also given to the importance of deliberation or the "act of decision making" in identifying the ways in which decisions are made.

Collectively, this data provided some insight into the various factors that may impact the involvement of principals and teachers in making decisions to improve curriculum. The last section of the review of literature presents research pertaining to the participation of principals and teachers in curriculum decision making.

Principal and Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Decision Making

> The question of who should be involved in decisions and in what ways can only be resolved by weighing the interests at stake and endeavoring to create a mechanism for taking these interests into account and balancing them against one another. (Schlechty, 1990, p. 51)

Schlechty describes a very simplistic, yet broad vision of curriculum decision making for the twenty-first century. He proposes the creation of a "mechanism" to take into account the humanistic factors that impact the process. Researchers have noted the role that personal and social factors play when involving principals and teachers in

curriculum decision making. They found that while administrators and teachers are the closest individuals to the learning environment of students, their degree of participation in curriculum improvement varies depending upon personal, professional, procedural, and political factors (Duke, Showers & Imber, 1980; Ruddick, 1987; Jackson, 1990; Johnson, 1990; Ben-Peretz, 1990, Schlechty, 1990; and Barth, 1990)). Among the factors that impact principal and teacher participation in curriculum decision making are their perceptions of their role, the habits and routines which they have established over the years, and the limited opportunities they have for engaging in the process (Lortie, 1975; Smylie, 1992) of curriculum improvement.

However, with the adoption of American 2000, support from various educational organizations, and the limited results from earlier studies, individual states and local school systems were strongly encouraged to re-establish the way they do business in order to bridge the gap between external decision making and internal practices. Support grew for principals and teachers be granted more authority, a variety of opportunities and the resources to effectively make decisions. The research conducted during this era questioned (1) how principals and teachers perceived themselves in this new role; (2) what the extent of their participation should, and (3) which decisions they should be responsible for making. The following studies suggest key elements that impact the involvement of principals and teachers in the decision making process to improve curriculum.

Principal Involvement in Curriculum Decision Making

Researchers continue to focus their attention on gathering data pertaining to the role of principals in the curriculum decision making process. They were in agreement that principals hold a pivotal role in creating conditions that define the culture of schools and

the changes that may occur within them (Fullan, 1991, Lamoureau, 1988, Sarason, 1982). Numerous studies into the holistic role of the principal made a distinction between the two essential components of the job: leadership and management (Trider & Leithwood, 1990; Louis & Miles, 1990). Louis and Miles concluded that leadership relates to mission, direction, inspiration, while management involves designing and carrying out plans, getting things done and working effectively with people.

According to Barth (1991), the "leadership role of the principal" has been redefined and restructured due to external pressures that are beyond their control. Principals no longer enjoy their authority status, as the capacity to govern has become a shared proposition with school improvement teams, the general public, and federal and state guidelines. Coupled with dwindling resources and an increase in diverse populations of students, principals are continually involved in a juggling act in an attempt to balance their time and maintain stability within their schools and among their constituents. They are also responsible for the implementation of change regardless of whether or not they truly favor the change. The following studies provide evidence of the turmoil and inconsistency that exists between role perception and external expectations.

A study conducted by Edu-Con (1984) of 137 principals and vice principals emphasized the increase in demand on their time. It wasn't that they objected to the additional responsibilities, their main concern was with the complexity and time demands involved in implementing new programs within their schools. More important, this study also revealed a 76% decrease in principal involvement in curriculum decision making.

Lortie's (1987) study of suburban Chicago elementary principals resulted in the identification of "four built in tendencies that stabilize" or hinder their involvement in

curriculum improvement. They include (1) recruitment and induction; (2) role constraints and psychic rewards; (3) the constraints of system standardization; and (4) career contingencies. Further analysis revealed that these obstacles limit principals' exposure to new ideas and the latest research, as well as, the degree to which they can work with teachers to explore new innovations.

In light of the obstacles or built-in tendencies, principals view themselves as instructional leaders. In 1978, Krajewski conducted a study to determine the role principals prefer to play and the role they actually play. He found that principals placed the highest value on instructional leadership activities: supervision, instruction, curriculum development, and staff development. They placed the lowest value on management functions, community relations, discipline, and pupil services.

However, as Martin & Willower, (1981) observed, principals have a tendency to "engage themselves in the most current and pressing situation...investing little time in reflective practice" (p. 80). The result is a major discrepancy between what principals' think should receive their time and attention and how they actually spend their time.

Berman and McLaughlin's (1977) study of 300 school systems on the role of principals in implementing innovations determined that "it's the principal's actions not what he says that carries the message as to whether change is to be taken seriously" (in Smith & Andrews, 1989, p. 26). Therefore, the degree of implementation of an innovation is different in each school due to the individual actions and concerns of the principals. In support, Sarason (1982) found that in carrying out a change that they do not support due to philosophical beliefs or the lack of expertise or personal knowledge, many principals present a negative attitude toward the change to those who will be

primarily affected by it. Trider and Leithwood (1988) found that many principals favored changes that related to their background interests. Thus, a major factor that shapes principals' perceptions of their role is the degree to which they feel that they can govern the course of action rather than relying on external factors or sources.

Barth concluded that in order for principals to influence change or a model of learning, they need a clear vision of where they want to go, as well as a sense of their own professionalism. They need to realize that change is both a personal and social phenomenon (Chamley, Caprio & Young, 1994) for themselves and for their teachers. Lamoureaux (1988) wrote that the principal must be "a productive learner...model a desire to learn, be actively involved in the process of learning, demonstrate a willingness to challenge current practices and seek alternative solutions to persistent problems in curriculum, instruction, and school organization" (p.22). For any improvement to occur, it is essential that the principal create an environment of shared participation.

Support for this viewpoint was established with the study conducted by Friedkin and Slater (1994). Their study examined the relationship among school performance, principals' leadership, and teachers' interpersonal interactions. The findings focused on the "centrality" of the principal and the importance of being (1) accessible and attentive to matters of concern to teachers, and (2) to engage in collaborative problem solving and decision making on instructional issues in a context of mutual respect (p. 151). This research emphasizes the crucial position that principals hold in determining the success or failure of curriculum improvement within their schools. The perceptions they have of their role, the working and learning environments that they establish for teachers, and their

attitude toward the change they are being asked to consider and implement impact the process of decision making, and consequently, the learning environment for students.

However, principals represent only one group of educators who impact the curriculum improvement process. The other group, teachers, also need to understand the importance of their role in the curriculum decision making process. The following research examines the teachers' role in curriculum decision making, as well as the factors that impede from effective participation in curriculum improvement.

Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Decision Making

Fullan (1990) wrote that teachers are involved in the "circumstances of teaching" which leaves little time for planning, constructive discussion, and thinking (p. 119). He cautioned that school districts who wish to include teachers in the curriculum improvement process must consider the conditions that exist within the teaching profession. They include teachers' perceptions of teaching as a career choice, teacher stress, and teacher burnout. A change in curriculum or instructional practices can either "aggravate teachers' problems or provide a glimmer of hope."

As a result of his study of teachers within their work environment, Sarason (1990) concluded that teachers would have a greater commitment to a change and would take a greater responsibility to ensure the success of that change if they feel that they have a say in creating the change. Fullan, on the other hand, believes that it's being naïve to think that involving teachers in curriculum improvement will increase its acceptance by other teachers. His research on teachers and change revealed that even when a change was introduced by a fellow teacher, it was considered as external as if it had come from the state department of education or the local university. To circumvent this problem, Fullan

suggested that teachers need to have some understanding of the "operational meaning" of the change before they can make a judgement about it (p. 128). He stated further that teachers must recognize the difference between change and the change process and become skilled in integrating both. To do this, they must also have a clear understanding that their colleagues are at different points in their teaching careers, with different sets of priorities, so that the end result may not be what was intended.

A prime example of the misunderstandings that can emerge occurred when Sarason (1990) asked a group of teachers if they were "accorded a role in educational decision making, what would you recommend?' He found that their initial responses were full of confusion, many asked for clarification, while others felt that some decisions affected them individually rather than collectively. He concluded that the proposal for teacher participation in curriculum decision making is far more complex in its "implication for action" and that teachers should begin by "participating in those decisions that particularly and powerfully affect them on a daily basis" (p. 59). He warned that "any advocate for teacher participation in decision making has to be extraordinarily clear about the consequences they envision if the proposal is implemented" (p. 62). To get a clear sense of why Sarason heeded this warning, the findings of several studies which probed teachers' perception of their role in the process, their willingness to participate, their assessment of the potential benefit of participating, and the impact of their participation on curriculum improvement will be presented.

Researchers are in agreement that teachers' perceptions of how they do their work are related to what they think is important in that work. When faced with a change or alteration in routine or practice, teachers tend to view the change in terms of their own

situations and their students (Olson, 1980; Connelly & Claudinin, 1982; Bacharach, Bamberger, Conley & Bauer,1990). Connelly & Claudinin wrote about the "comprehensive view that teachers have of themselves, their situations, and their role within a situation" (p.183). They identified two key elements: *theoretical knowledge* which accounts for their practical understanding of a curriculum situation and *personal beliefs and values* which guide what they can and should do in a curriculum situation.

Johnston's (1990) study of teachers' perceptions or "images" of themselves involved in curriculum decision making supported the previous claim. She concluded that teachers view curriculum decision making as a personal activity and that the images of their involvement are continually modified with the more experiences they have. She found that:

(1) the starting point for curriculum change is personal;

(2) though aware of external influences, they did not allow them to influence the decisions that they made;

(3) that their personality and beliefs were interwoven in the decisions;

(4) they did not focus on a specific curriculum design framework; instead they focused on what they knew from teaching and therefore, the decisions seemed "to flow automatically or unconsciously." (p. 468).

In addition to the impact of teacher images on curriculum decision making, several studies have also documented how teachers view their role, their willingness to participate and their perceptions of the costs and benefits impact their involvement in curriculum decision making. Their individual and collective research revealed additional factors for consideration when attempting to involve teachers in curriculum decision making. They include:

(1) the degree to which they view their role in the process as crucial or meaningless exercise and at worst a manipulative tool (Conley, 1980, p. 261);

(2) the benefits are minimal or nonexistent (Conley, 1980, p. 260); the costs of involvement exceed the benefits – 5 costs as opposed to 3 benefits (Duke, Showers, & Imber, 1980, p. 95-98);

(3) issues which teachers do not care to be involved in due to interest (Schneider, p. 26) or their lack of curriculum theory (Ruddick, 1987);

(4) their perceptions of the working relationship they have with their principals (Smylie, 1992, p. 66);

(5) the demands of teaching, sense of responsibility and accountability in their work with students; (Young, 1989, p. 367; Ben-Peretz, 1990, Smylie, 1992.); and

(6) their limited perspective which focuses on immediacy, informality, autonomy and individuality (Jackson, 1990, p. 133).

Ben-Peretz (1990) also found that teachers are not comfortable with accepting greater responsibility in sharing the blame for bad decisions; going along with administrative decisions, and experiencing the emotional effects of frustration, energy loss, disillusionment, and powerlessness (p. 102). Her further research with Tamir (1981) of the relationship between teachers' view of their role as autonomous decision makers revealed that teachers think in terms of content and students activities rather than in terms of objectives. This narrow perception of curriculum seriously impacts their ability to understand and participate beyond the scope of the classroom to engage in curriculum decision making within a broader context.

Conley (1991) may have said it best, "The issue is to properly frame participation to form a closer integration of management decision making at district, school and classroom levels" (p. 265). Forging a "richness of understanding" (Carson, p. 25) for and among principals and teachers comes from providing them with experiences that foster an

understanding of the process of decision making within the school system and the decisions they are being asked to make. A clear purpose and focus for decision making is essential in order to establish a uniform and collective approach that allows participants to reach a consensus and to avoid a potential source of conflict (Monson & Monson, 1993).

Summary

This section of the literature review examined research pertaining to the involvement of principals and teachers in curriculum improvement. Based upon the data presented, various factors were documented that impact their participation in the process. The factors that impact principals' participation include:

(1) their involvement in a juggling act to balance their time and maintain stability within their school and among their constituents;

(2) the additional responsibilities, complexity and time, that go along with implementing a new program within their schools;

(3) limited exposure to new ideas and the latest research and time to work with teachers to explore new innovations due to their involvement in recruitment and induction; role constraints and psychic rewards; system standardization; and career contingencies;

(4) the discrepancy between what principals think should receive their time and how they actually spend their time;

(5) the lack of personal knowledge or expertise may hinder their support of a change; and, most important,

(6) their need to govern the coarse of action rather than relying on external factors or sources.

Among the factors that impact teachers' participation in curriculum decision making are:

(1) their perceptions of change and the change process;

(2) their perceptions of the decision making process and their role in it;

(3) their inability to visualize the broader context of curriculum beyond;

(4) their personalities, belief systems, and attitudes toward the cost and benefits of participation;

(5) their lack of curriculum theory beyond what they have learned from teaching;

(6) the working relationship that has been established with their principals; and

(7) their need for immediacy, informality, individuality, and autonomy.

Conclusion

In closing, the purpose of this literature review was to establish a theoretical and practical foundation for examining curriculum improvement from multi-level perspectives. The divisions between and among the five sections were necessary to document the interrelationship between the broad scope of national reform, state supported initiatives, and district level school improvement efforts and their collective impact on the decision making practices and the involvement of principals and teachers in the process.

The next chapter provides a description of the research approaches used to collect, report, and analyze data for the two strands of inquiry that were conducted for this study. The first inquiry involves the broad base survey of thirty-five public school systems in one state and the second inquiry focuses on an ethnographic study of one local public school system whose educators were involved in various levels of curriculum improvement.

C H A P T E R III

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The research procedures used in this study involved two separate strands of inquiry. This chapter describes each strand. The individual components of each strand are detailed separately to preserve the integrity and ensure the clarity of each inquiry.

The first strand of inquiry involved a broad investigation into the various curriculum improvement procedures and the problems public school systems in one state have when attempting to involve principals and teachers in curriculum improvement. The description of this inquiry includes the initial selection of participants and the procedures for gathering data. The three research questions and research objectives were considered in the development and distribution of the survey. The procedures for collecting, reporting, and analyzing the findings for each research question are also detailed.

The second strand of inquiry sought to describe or create a portrait (Lightfoot, 1983) through participant observation (Bogden & Boklen, 1982; Jorgensen, 1989; Spradley, 1980) of one school system involved in curriculum improvement. The third research question served as the foundation for this inquiry. The description of the research approach used to conduct this in-depth study included the procedures for selecting the site and participants, and the methods for collecting, reporting, and analyzing the data gleaned through observation and participation. More important, the steps taken to ensure validity and a non-bias perspective are described.

Design of the First Strand of Inquiry

The first strand of inquiry involved the collection of empirical data through a survey of public school systems in one state. This format for data collection and reporting was loosely based upon the studies described by Goodlad (1979), Klein (1991), & Smylie (1992). Using the three research questions as the foundation for the study, research objectives were carefully crafted to secure a clear picture of the procedures and problems each school system experienced when involved in curriculum improvement. Survey questions were then developed to collect data that would be pertinent to each of the research questions. Additional background information in the form of written documents that described procedures or personnel involvement was also requested. An introductory letter was drafted and mailed along with the survey to thirty-five school systems (Appendix A).

The data received from the responding school systems was organized into three spreadsheet charts to coincide with the research questions and objectives (Appendix B). The use of the spreadsheet format to document and report all survey questions assisted the researcher in organizing the data to conduct inductive and logical analysis (Guba, 1978; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Patton, 1980; Spradley, 1980). Inductive analysis involved searching for domains (categories) and patterns in the data to determine commonalties across school systems. Logical analysis involved cross-classifying the established patterns to generate new insights about how the data could be organized and to look for additional patterns that were exceptions to the status quo. Information gleaned from the improvement plans that were received from six school systems was also included on the spreadsheets and within the analysis portion of this study. This initial

analysis resulted in closer examination of these six systems and it revealed that they fell into three distinct categories based on size, demographics, operational procedures, personnel involvement and levels of accomplishment in improving curriculum.

Sampling Procedures and Description of Sample

The thirty-five public school systems within the state of Rhode Island were selected for their diverse demographic features. The school systems represented a cross section of urban, rural, and suburban communities of varying populations and socio-economic levels. While under the auspices of a Board of Regents and a State Department of Education, these school systems have some leeway to function independently in areas of budgetary concerns, program development, curriculum policy making and professional development. All receive state aid based upon a formula that was recently revised, but still remains controversial.

In 1987 and then again in 1995, these school systems were given the directive to engage in curriculum improvement. Reform in 1987 took place as a result of the state legislature passing the Literacy and Dropout Prevention Act and instituting the Basic Education Plan (B.E.P.) State aid was tied to developing, implementing, and documenting curriculum improvement. From 1994 till present, the national educational initiative has played a major role in directing the course of curriculum improvement. As national standards and state standards emerged for every academic area, school systems within this state were encouraged to align their district goals and curricula to reflect them. With much activity taking place within the school systems at the time of this inquiry, responses to the survey on curriculum improvement are expected to reveal vast differences in

operational procedures, in the individuals who are guiding the process, and in the various levels of accomplishment.

Twenty-one responses to the initial mailing were received. A second mailing was then sent to those school systems that did not respond. Five additional responses were received bringing the total number of participating school systems to twenty-six. Six out of the twenty-six school systems that responded also included copies of their procedural guidelines to improve curriculum. A review of all the data, including demographic features, revealed that these specific school systems represented a cross section of rural, urban, and suburban communities, therefore, these schools were judged to be typical of public school systems throughout the state. A brief description of these school systems is included in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Six Participating School Systems with
Long Range Plans for Curriculum Improvement

SCHOOL SYSTEM	TYPE	NO. of SCHOOLS	STUDENT POP.	NO. of TEACHES	SUB. LUNCH PROG	REVENUE SOURCES		
						FED	STATE	LOCAL
I	Urban	11 Elem/2 Mid/1 HS	6,733	456	31%	3%	37%	60%
H	Suburb	2 Elem/1 Mid/1 HS	2264	193	8%	1%	8%	91%
Y	Suburb	3 Elem/2 Mid/1 HS	2697	208	9%	3%	23%	74%
E	Rural	4 Elem/1 Mid/1 HS	3880	291	15%	2%	36.4%	61.6%
T	Rural	6 Elem/2 Mid/1 HS	4448	288	14%	2%	28.7%	69.3%
V	Rural	1 Elem/1 Mid/1 HS	1692	128	12%	2%	32.7%	65.3%

Development of the Survey Instrument

Three research questions established the foundation for the development of the survey instrument used in the first strand of inquiry. Due to the broad context inspired by

each question, it was necessary to develop a list of research objectives. Survey questions were then developed in the form of multiple choice, rankings, and narratives were developed to acquire specific information addressed by the research objectives. The questions are as follows:

Research Question One: What are the procedures used by selected public school systems to improve curriculum?

The following research objectives were developed to gain insight into specific aspects of the various procedures that are used by school systems to improve curriculum. Questions 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 1f, 1g, and 1h of the *Curriculum Improvement Survey* address the content of these objectives.

- Describe the different procedures that are in place for improving curriculum in public school systems.
- Identify some internal and external factors that influence the procedures that public school systems use to improve curriculum.
- Describe the degree to which the procedures are implemented and how often curriculum improvement takes place.

Research Question Two: What are the major ways in which selected public school systems involve teachers and principals in curriculum decision making?

The following research objectives were developed to gather data pertaining to specific aspects of principals and teacher participation in curriculum decision making. Questions 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e, 2f, 2g, and 2h of the *Curriculum Improvement Survey* address the content of these objectives.

- Describe the extent to which principals and teachers are involved in curriculum decision making.
- Identify the channels that are present for principals and teachers to present their ideas or concerns for improving curriculum.
- Identify some of the major curriculum decisions that principals and teachers are expected to make.

Research Question Three: What are some of the major problems that a school system may experience when attempting to implement curriculum improvement?

The following research objective was developed to gather information pertaining to the problems that school systems encounter in their attempt to implement their plans to improve curriculum. Questions 3a and 3b of the *Curriculum Improvement Survey* address the content of this objective.

- Identify the major problems that have been experienced during attempts to implement curriculum improvement and the degree to which they have occurred.

The questions were reviewed prior to mailing by a Curriculum Director to ensure clarity. Upon approval, an introductory letter was written to detail the intent of the study and request participation.

Data Collection, Reporting, and Analysis

With the selection of the participants and the development of the survey and introductory letter completed, the thirty-five school systems were contacted by phone to obtain the name and address of the individual responsible for curriculum improvement. The survey and introductory letter were then sent to the individual along with a request for any documents that may describe the procedures or provide further elaboration of the survey responses. A self-addressed stamped envelope was also included for all responses.

Upon receipt of the survey data and descriptive documents obtained from school systems, the researcher created individual spreadsheet charts for each of the three research questions. The school systems were assigned a letter name to protect their privacy and their survey responses were recorded on the individual spreadsheets. Those systems that did not respond were also given a letter name and included on the spreadsheet. While the survey responses and the narrative explanations served as the primary vehicles for data collection and analysis, the three research questions provided the foundation for the study. Research objectives were developed for each research question. These objectives would assist the researcher in focusing the direction of the study to ensure that the three research

questions are answered. Each research question is stated along with the specific steps for reporting and analyzing the responses.

Research Question One: What are the procedures used by selected public school systems to improve curriculum?

The responses from twenty-six school systems to all aspects of the first research question pertaining to their procedures for curriculum improvement were compiled and recorded on a spreadsheet chart. For those school systems that have no set procedures, it was simply noted, and the number of school systems that did not have a system of procedures was recorded. Using inductive analysis, the researcher then examined the survey responses to this question to identify patterns or unique procedures. The procedures that seem to be common across the school systems were described. Special procedures that exist in some school systems were also reported. Three individuals with expertise in curriculum theory reviewed the procedures in order to identify and establish content validity.

Six school systems provided the researcher with their various approaches to improving curriculum. Information that supported or elaborated upon their survey responses to the first research question and its objectives was retrieved and written in narrative form by the researcher.

Research Question Two: What are the major ways in which selected public school systems involve teachers and principals in curriculum decision making?

A spreadsheet for the second research question was developed to record the responses from the twenty-six school systems to identify the ways that teachers and principals participate in curriculum improvement. The individual responses were

examined to identify the extent of their involvement in improving curriculum, the channels that are available for them to present their ideas and concerns, and the major decisions they are expected to make. The researcher also studied the improvement plans supplied by six school systems. This was done for two reasons. First, to verify their survey responses in relation to the individual research questions and their objectives; and second, to identify in more depth the ways that teachers and principals participate in improving curriculum. In several cases, schematic charts were presented to illustrate their roles in the curriculum improvement process (Appendix C). As a result, the major ways, both common and unique, that teachers and principals are involved in curriculum improvement were reported.

Research Question Three: What are some of the major problems that a public school system may experience when attempting to implement curriculum improvement?

The responses, in the form of numerical rankings, identified the problems and their degree of severity as experienced and reported by the twenty-six school systems. All of the responses were first recorded on a spreadsheet chart to organize the data. The responses were then examined to determine the severity of each problem. A second table was created listing the thirteen problems contained in the survey question and three ranking categories. The rankings for each problem were recorded based upon a high, average, or low degree of severity. The areas showing the greatest number of responses were shaded in, thus, enabling the researcher to determine both the problems that were experienced by school systems most frequently and least frequently during curriculum improvement.

Summary

The first inquiry involved the survey of public school systems to determine the procedures and problems they experience when involved in improving curriculum. First, an analysis of the survey responses was conducted to determine the patterns and categories they have in common. Next, the improvement plans from six school systems were examined for information that supported or elaborated upon their survey responses. A comparison of the demographic data revealed that these school systems represented a cross section of urban, suburban, and rural areas.

Like pieces of a large jigsaw puzzle, these data provided the researcher with the individual pieces to produce a vivid picture of the curriculum improvement process, the extent of personnel involvement, and the problems that exist. This picture will be reviewed later in light of the ethnographic study of one public school system that was conducted as part of the second strand of inquiry. The description of this inquiry along with procedures for data collection, analysis, and validation and verification follows.

Design of the Second Strand of Inquiry

The second strand of inquiry was a two-year ethnographic study of an urban school system intensely involved in curriculum improvement. The school system that was selected for this in-depth study was in the process of seeking ways to incorporate national and state guidelines, as well as, respond to the needs of the district's student population. It was the ultimate goal of this system to establish procedures for curriculum improvement that could readily accommodate change from external sources and to institute measures for assessing the existing conditions for learning.

Upon securing permission from the Superintendent of Schools (Appendix D), the researcher observed, participated, and recorded the discussions and explanations of the activities that were pertinent to selective groups of teachers and principals who engaged in curriculum improvement. Observational data were recorded in a separate journal for each group. These data provided the researcher with insights into the dynamics of each committee, their decision making practices, and the problems they encountered when involved in curriculum improvement.

Crucial to ethnographic research is the relationship that the researcher establishes with the members of the community that is being studied (Johnson, 1975). As noted earlier, the role of ethnographer within a familiar setting has its advantages and disadvantages. True participant observation involves the study of an unfamiliar setting to look for patterns within individual behavior or dialogue that will help frame the context and enable the researcher to draw certain conclusions. The researcher had the unique distinction of having worked within the selected school system for twenty-five years in various capacities: classroom teacher, Chapter I/Literacy Teacher, Reading Consultant, curriculum writer and evaluator, and for the last nine years, as the Chairperson for the Curriculum Council. Therefore, the degree of familiarity with individuals and participation in the group activities varied. The possibility of pre-conceived ideas about the individuals or the steps involved is noted. Precautions were taken to ensure that personal bias did not interfere with the collection of data through the system of triangulation. In most cases, members of each committee were assigned to take the notes at each meeting and sharing them with the rest of the group. In instances where this was not possible, at least two

individuals from each of the committees were enlisted to review the notes of the each meeting and/or work session that pertained to their group.

Selection and Description of Individual Committees

As the Curriculum Council Chairperson, the researcher worked with various school personnel to develop ways to achieve the goals of the school system. At the same time, she was able to observe and experience the meanings and interactions of people from the role of an insider (Jorgensen, 1989) at committee meetings and workshops. A semantic map of the various committees and groups is presented in Figure 3.2 on page 93.

The school personnel that were involved in the curriculum improvement process included classroom teachers from grades K-12, area coordinators for academic and non-academic subjects, the Directors of Literacy, Physical Education/Health, and ESL, and elementary and secondary school principals. Each individual brought to the process diverse educational backgrounds and experiences, and different levels of expertise in applying curriculum theory. They all were primarily veteran staff members working for at least ten years in the system. While some of the individuals volunteered their time to attend after school and summer meetings aimed at addressing issues involved in curriculum improvement, others received stipends for selected activities.

The researcher also met with the Assistant Superintendent, who was responsible for overseeing the curriculum improvement process, to gain insight into the problems that exist when attempting to implement curriculum improvement. This particular individual had extensive background knowledge of the community and the student population as a result of her thirty years of experience as an educator and administrator within the school system.

Collectively, the pertinent discussions with the Assistant Superintendent and the observations and notes from group meetings provided the researcher with insight into the dynamics of each committee, their decision making practices, and the problems encountered when involved in curriculum improvement.

For the purpose of this study, emphasis was placed on examining problems of a personal, professional, procedural, and political nature that impact curriculum improvement. Thus, the researcher was able to create a Athick description" (Geertz, 1983) of the problems a school system encounters when attempting to improve curriculum.

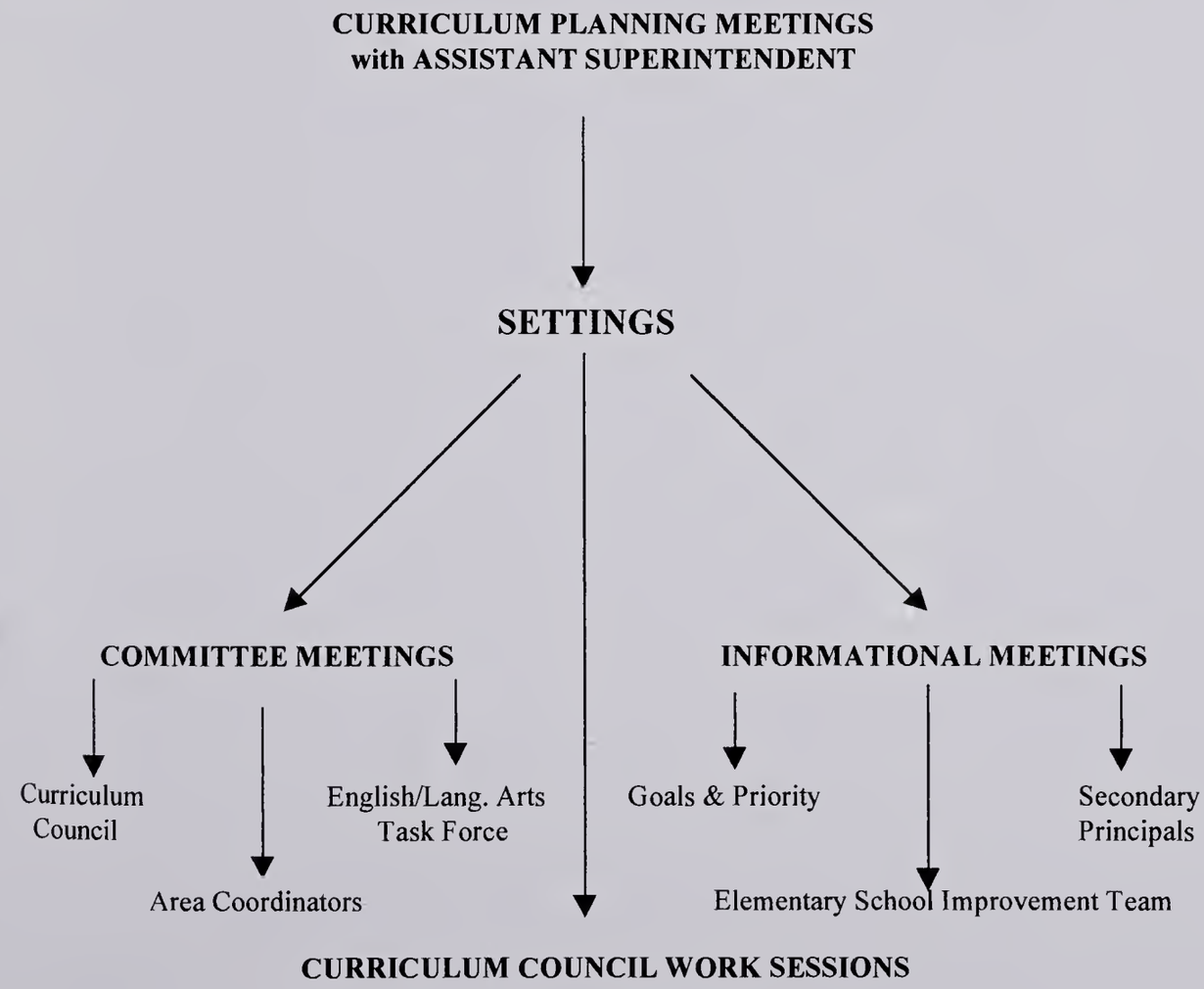

Figure 3.1
Selected Committees for Ethnographic Study

Data Collection, Recording, and Analysis

Notes were taken at each meeting over the course of two years. At the end of these sessions, the notes were reviewed and further details were added. To avoid any points of confusion concerning the notes, a system of triangulation was used. Certain individuals within each group were contacted to clarify and make any changes to ensure that the notes were accurate. Due to the researcher's long affiliation with each of the committees and individual members for the last two years, additional information and insights were provided which assisted in describing the culture and norms that exist within the setting.

Initial observations, reviews of the literature, and preliminary examinations of the data revealed that the problems are of four types: (1) Personal, (2) Professional, (3) Procedural, and (4) Political. The researcher related these four different types of problems to various aspects of the curriculum improvement process, including curriculum planning, development, implementation, and evaluation. Once all of the data were collected, the information pertaining to each group was examined and recorded in the schematic grid. This grid also served as the means for reporting information concerning the interrelationship between the types of problems and tasks involved curriculum improvement (Appendix E).

A portion of Spradley's developmental research sequence (1980) was used as the framework for analysis. Domain analysis was conducted to determine the specific kinds of problems that have been experienced. The problems were sorted into categories and then

used to develop a conceptual scheme that was used to report the various types of problems that influence curriculum implementation.

A random group of individuals was asked to review and discuss the findings as they appeared on the schematic grid. This provided teachers and principals with the opportunity to clarify and expand upon the problems that had been identified. It also insured the accuracy of the problems that were identified by the researcher. In the cases where there has been a gap between what was identified and what had been confirmed, the researcher re-examined the data with the assistance of a colleague who helped decide if a problem indeed existed.

Finally, the researcher met with the Curriculum Director to review the data collected from each group. This added more detail and clarified any confusing points. Special care was taken to insure that the Curriculum Director did not impose other problems on the data, but worked within the parameters of the problems that had been identified. The problems which teachers and principals experienced in bringing about curriculum improvement are identified and reported in this study by the researcher.

Validation and Verification

During the course of the data collection, various steps were taken to counteract, as much as possible, the effects of the researcher's presence upon participants and researcher bias. The data sources did undergo triangulation or cross-check for consistency to compensate for the close proximity of the researcher as an educator within the school system. This involved "...the comparison of data relating to the same phenomenon but deriving from different phases of the fieldwork, different points in the temporal cycles

occurring in the setting, or... the accounts of different participants involved in the setting" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983).

Verification of this study was conducted by comparing data from participant observations, the notes from meetings and workshops with teachers and principals involved in curriculum improvement, and the individual conference sessions with the Curriculum Director. These comparisons were conducted to provide verification or establish a clear understanding of curriculum improvement at the local school level and the problems that may exist.

Summary

The second inquiry consisted of an ethnographic study that was conducted within one school system selected from the twenty-six systems that participated in the first inquiry. Based the locale of the system and her role as Chairperson of the Curriculum Council, the researcher was afforded access to various committees involved in curriculum improvement. This access enabled the researcher to paint an individual descriptive picture of the culture of each site and draw some conclusions about their role in the process.

The next Chapter presents, analyzes and discusses the findings from both inquiries. Upon completion of this study, the researcher will present these findings in a brief paper that will be disseminated it to all of the participating districts. It is the researcher's hope that this information will be of some benefit to administrators, principals, and teachers in their quest to establish and improve the conditions or environments that exist within their school systems to improve curriculum.

C H A P T E R IV

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The major purpose of this chapter is to present the results from the two strands of inquiry that were conducted for this study. First, the data from the *Curriculum Improvement Survey* administered to thirty-five public school syst ems are reported, analyzed, and discussed. Aspects of improvement plans provided by six respondents are also included in this presentation. Next, the information gleaned from a two-year ethnographic study in one public school system is detailed and discussed. Finally, the quantitative and qualitative data gathered from both inquiries are presented and discussed collectively as they pertain to each of the three research questions that were posed.

First Strand of Inquiry: Curriculum Improvement Survey

As described in Chapter Three, a detailed survey was constructed based upon the three broad research questions. Out of the thirty-five public school systems that received the survey instrument, a total of 26 or 75% were completed and returned, with six respondents also including their curriculum improvement plans. All survey responses are analyzed and discussed under the appropriate research question and objectives.

Research Question 1: What are the procedures used by selected public school systems to improve curriculum?

Three research objectives were developed to gather information pertaining to specific procedural aspects of curriculum improvement. These objectives focused on identifying the procedures that are in place; identifying the individuals and the external factors that impact improving curriculum; and revealing the various time frames in which it

occurs. Each research objective is stated along with the data gleaned from the related survey questions that were completed by the twenty-six respondents.

- Describe the different procedures that are in place for improving curriculum in public school systems.

Questions (1a and 1d) of the *Curriculum Improvement Survey* requested information pertaining to the procedures that public school systems use to improve curriculum. Table 4.1 on page 99 presents the results. Of the 26 systems who responded, 22 or 85% of them stated that they have a long range improvement plan or alternative steps in place. Coupled with the existence of a plan or a series of alternative steps are administrative regulations which guide the plan. Of the 22 systems that acknowledged having a plan, only 15 or 68% of them responded that administrative regulations guided their improvement plan. These data in conjunction with the responses to survey question (1f) suggest that where administrative regulations exist, it is the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and/or Director of Curriculum who oversee the improvement process.

Though four school systems stated that no formal plan existed, three of the systems acknowledged that alternative steps were in place. The four school systems, (K, L, EE and GG), are relatively small in size and student population compared to the surrounding cities and towns. Their narrative comments indicated that they tend to work on a continual basis as a close knit group in addressing curriculum improvement issues due to their size. Pertinent statements supporting these findings were supplied by two of the respondents who stated that in the case where no procedural plan existed,

> "Staff discussion leading to consensus - improvement of curriculum in technology, curriculum arts, health, etc." (K)

"This district/school system is comprise of 2 elementary schools. The impetus for curriculum improvement is often principal initiated; however, teacher "voice" in this area is evident." (L)

Table 4.1
Procedures for Curriculum Improvement

SCHOOL SYSTEMS	LONG RANGE PLAN FOR IMPROVING CURRICULUM	ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS GUIDE THE PROCESS	STEPS TAKEN TO IMPROVE CURRICULUM WHERE NO PLAN EXISTS
A	**Y**	N	-
B	**Y**	N	-
C	No Response	No Response	No Response
D	**Y**	N	**
E	**Y**	**Y**	-
F	**Y**	**Y**	-
G	**Y**	**Y**	-
H	**Y**	No Response	-
I	**Y**	**Y**	-
J	**Y**	**Y**	-
K	N	N	**Y****
L	N	N	**Y****
M	**Y**	N	-
N	No Response	No Response	No Response
O	**Y**	**Y**	-
P	**Y**	N	**
Q	No Response	No Response	No Response
R	No Response	No Response	No Response
S	**Y**	**Y**	-
T	**Y**	**Y**	-
U	**Y**	**Y**	-
V	**Y**	N	-
W	**Y**	**Y**	-
X	No Response	No Response	No Response
Y	**Y**	**Y**	-
Z	**Y**	**Y**	**
AA	No Response	No Response	No Response
BB	**Y**	**Y**	-
CC	**Y**	**Y**	-
DD	No Response	No Response	No Response
EE	N	N	N**
FF	**Y**	**Y**	**
GG	N	N	**Y****
HH	No Response	No Response	No Response
35 (2 districts have merged)	**26 or 75% Responded** **8 or 25% No Response** **22 or 85% = Yes** **4 or 15% = No**	**25 or 71% Responded** **9 or 24% No Response** **1 or 4% Left Blank** **15 or 58% = Yes** **10 or 38% = No**	**26 or 75% Responded** **8 or 25% No Response** **3 or 75% = Yes** **1 or 25% = No**

Y = ***Yes*** **N** = ***No*** ** = ***Narrative comment was included***

School system (EE) responded "no" to both a long range plan and/or alternative steps used the newness of the Director of Curriculum as the reason for the lack of a procedural plan. School systems reporting no regulations stated that the responsibility for implementing the process falls into the hands of the principals, curriculum committees, and teachers. Size appeared to be a factor, as well as the impact of site-based management or shared decision making which was indicated in separate responses to other survey questions suggests other means through which curriculum improvement may take place.

- Identify some internal and external factors that influence the procedures that public schools systems use to improve curriculum.

Survey questions (1g & 1h) requested information pertaining to the persons who are influential in initiating or guiding the process, as well as any other internal or external determinants that influence the process. Table 4.2 on page 101 presents the results from survey question (1g) that focused on the initiators within a school system. Respondents were asked to rank order a list of possible initiators from 1 to 8, with "1" having the greatest influence to "8" having the least.

It is important to note that while twenty-six respondents returned the survey, many chose to respond in other ways than the directions for this question stated. This resulted in a discrepancy in the totals for each of the categories of initiators. For example, eight respondents followed survey directions; three respondents ranked their top 3 choices (1-3); three respondents ranked their top 4 choices (1-4); one respondent ranked his top 5 choices (1-5); one marked only 1 choice; one checked 3 categories giving them equal value; and two respondents

left this question blank. Based upon the varied ways in which this question was answered, it was necessary to devise a way to sufficiently analyze and report all of their responses.

Table 4.2
Initiators of Curriculum Improvement in Public School Systems

TEACHERS	16	5	7	4	3	1	0	0	0	0
CURRICULUM COUNCIL	12	8	3	1	2	0	1	0	0	1
CURRICULUM DIRECTOR	12	3	4	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
PRINCIPALS	10	1	4	5	2	3	2	0	0	2
ADMINISTRATORS	8	5	1	2	4	2	2	0	1	3
AREA COORDINATORS	3	0	2	1	4	1	1	0	1	2
PARENTS	2	0	0	2	2	4	6	3	0	9
STUDENTS	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	4	9	15
OTHER	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**5th**	**6th**	**7th**	**8th**	**Total**

GREATEST INFLUENCE ← **RANKINGS** → **LEAST INFLUENCE**

The vertical axis of Table 4.2 presents the initiators in descending order from those having the greatest influence to the individuals who have the least influence. The horizontal axis presents the results attained from the rank ordering of responses for each initiator. The greatest and least influence totals for each initiator were tabulated at both ends of the spectrum by focusing on the total number of responses recorded in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place values and the 8th, 9th, 10th place values.

These data revealed that within the school systems that responded, teachers, the Curriculum Council, the Curriculum Director, and principals are the primary initiators of

curriculum improvement in public school systems. In most cases, the Curriculum Council is comprised of teachers and principals under the leadership of the Director of Curriculum. At the other end of the spectrum, parents and students received low rankings for their role in initiating curriculum improvement. These findings do not rule them out completely, but suggest that in comparison to the other initiators they were asked to rank, the respondents felt parents and students have the least amount of influence.

The second half of this objective focused on external determinants that may also influence curriculum improvement. Table 4.5 on page 103 lists the ten determinants as they appeared in survey question (1g). Once again, the respondents were asked to rank order each determinant from 1 to 10, with "1" awarded to the greatest influence and moving in descending order to "10" having the least influence on curriculum improvement within their school systems.

Like the previous survey question, several respondents did not rank every determinant. Rather, they ranked the top three with a checkmark and as a result, these responses were given equal billing and counted as having the same amount of influence in the rankings. The determinants were placed on the vertical axis of the table in descending order based upon the total of the top three (1^{st}, 2^{nd}, 3^{rd}) rankings. In doing so, rankings for the determinants having the least amount of influence could also be documented at the other end of the spectrum. Determinants having the greatest and the least influence on curriculum improvement are shaded to highlight their importance in the rankings.

These data revealed that among the determinants that have the greatest influence on curriculum improvement are state standards, teacher recommendations, national standards, and district standards. Showing some influence was parent pressure. This can

be attributed to those communities where parents are part of school improvement teams or curriculum councils. Having very little, if any, influence were book companies and interest groups. The results recorded for the influence of test results is quite interesting, because each year this particular state publishes the test results of every community. Some communities also publish the scores of individual schools. With the public eye on test results, it is surprising that the respondents did not rank this category as having a greater influence.

Table 4.3
Determinants Influencing Curriculum Improvement

State Standards	11	4	3	4	2	2	1	1	3	0	0	
Teacher Recommend	10	3	3	4	2	2	1	2	0	1	0	
District Standards	10	4	3	3	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	
National Standards	10	8	2	0	0	3	2	1	0	1	0	
Needs Assessment	9	3	4	2	3	2	2	0	0	1	0	
Research	6	3	0	3	3	2	1	0	3	0	0	
Test Results	4	0	1	3	3	0	2	1	1	4	0	5
Book Companies	2	0	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	3	6	1
Interest Groups	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	4	0	5	9
	Total	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	Total

GREATEST INFLUENCE → **RANKINGS** → **LEAST INFLUENCE**

The improvement plans received from six school systems provided qualitative evidence to support the quantitative data discussed thus far under each of the sub-questions. The plans vary in terms of content and specificity. For example, four of the school systems indicated that they have a formal curriculum committee to guide the

improvement process. Varying in title, two of the districts referred to the committee as a Curriculum Council, one called it a Curriculum Coordinating Council, and the last referred to it as a Leadership Team. Of the two remaining systems that also sent copies of their plans, both indicated a strong presence of administrative regulations guiding the improvement process. One district detailed the roles and responsibilities of the school committee, curriculum coordinator, principals, and teachers, defined curriculum theory terms, and presented a time line of activities. The other district sent their previous plan, as well as their proposed plan, which went beyond the identification of roles and responsibilities. Key aspects of each plan are presented to reveal the similarities and differences that exist in relation to the organization of personnel, the structure of the improvement plan, and how it is implemented.

District E

District E's curriculum improvement plan focused on the organization and responsibilities of its personnel. The plan calls for the establishment of a committee, a Curriculum Council, whose membership includes individuals from every facet of the school system. This Council is responsible for "coordinating, reviewing, and recommending the implementation, elimination, and modification of curriculum and programs." Specific duties and responsibilities are outlined, as well as procedures for various improvements related activities and monthly meetings. Though set guidelines for curriculum improvement were not delineated, a formal document for proposing new courses was also included in the information. Subject area subcommittees are responsible for writing the curriculum. A high school curriculum committee reviews and accepts proposals for course changes before submitting them to the Curriculum Council.

District V

District V's plan for curriculum improvement was constructed with the assistance of an outside educational consultant firm working in conjunction with a committee of teachers representing the six academic areas. While the hierarchy organization of personnel reflects a strong sense of administrative support and guidance, teacher and parent participation is encouraged at the school level through individual school Study Groups and academic area Curriculum Teams. The Study Groups are responsible for monitoring the process within each school through the collection of data from various curriculum activities. The Curriculum Teams are responsible for developing plans for the individual discipline areas. One member from each Curriculum Team serves as a member of the Leadership Team who oversees the curriculum improvement process along with the Director of Elementary Education and the Curriculum Coordinator. This joint effort between administration, the Leadership Team and Curriculum Teams resulted in a four stage plan of improvement: (1) Planning and Analysis; (2) Design and Development; (3) Implementation; and (4) Evaluation. The plan includes detailed tasks to be completed at each stage to ensure continuity, open lines of communication, and accountability.

District Y

The curriculum improvement plan for District Y was developed by a Curriculum Coordinating Council. Similar to the Leadership Team and Study Groups previously discussed, this Council is made up of teachers and administrators representing individual councils for designated academic and nonacademic areas. Their improvement plan, first implemented in September 1994, outlines five major elements: (1) Needs Assessment; (2) Councils; (3) Communications; (4) Implementation Strategies; and (5) Evaluation. Within

each element are detailed tasks that if followed provide a comprehensive and ongoing approach to improving curriculum.

District I

District I provided the most comprehensive plan. In addition to identifying the individuals who are involved, and their roles and responsibilities, the plan also outlined specific procedures for (1) developing, implementing, and assessing curriculum, (2) outlining and implementing a five year time line for curriculum improvement, (3) linking school improvement and curriculum improvement, and (4) providing suggestions for selecting textbooks and materials in light of minimizing racial and gender bias were also included. A district-wide Curriculum Coordinating Committee oversees and coordinates the entire curriculum process K-12, which includes establishing the curriculum priorities of this vast multi-ethnic school system. Members of this committee also serve on individual Content Area Committees to complete specific activities that address what they have identified as five phases of curriculum development within nine steps toward curriculum improvement. Of specific interest is the emphasis that this school system places on the alignment of national, state, and district standards. The alignment of these standards has served as the basis for establishing their vision for all students to meet with academic success.

District H

At the time of this research, District H was at the beginning stage of the curriculum review process. A district-wide curriculum committee was in the process of looking at models for curriculum review, examining their existing curriculum, exploring trends within the individual disciplines, and identifying curriculum objectives. In addition

to the newly proposed plan, the respondent also sent a copy of their previous improvement plan. In comparing the two plans, it was evident that the new proposal provides for a methodical, yet, more comprehensive approach to improving curriculum. The original plan was restrictive in its chain of command and focused on the writing of formal reports to keep central administration abreast of what was happening in each area. The new plan, guided by the results of a needs assessment that identified the strengths and weaknesses of their curriculum, is based on four phases: (1) Research and Development; (2) Communication; (3) Implementation; and (4) Assessment. A chart outlining the content area of math within the four phase improvement process provides an excellent illustration of their process in action.

One aspect set this plan apart from the other improvement plans previously discussed. While a committee was established to look into a process for improving the new draft, the administration appears to have the reins in creating the improvement plan for individual content area curriculum committees to follow. These committees will include staff from the individual areas to meet regularly to review, study, analyze, critique, and revise the curriculum. However, like District Y, District H also included the phase entitled "communication." A heavy emphasis was placed on communicating to the teaching staff and parents the new curriculum to be covered and the materials to be used.

District T

The sixth school system, District T, adopted their improvement plan in July 1996. A district curriculum committee was formed headed by the curriculum director and composed of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and elected officials to oversee the improvement process. Their improvement plan relied on "curriculum cycles" to define

curriculum terms. The following individual steps were also detailed: (1) Assessment of Student Needs; (2) Development of Goals and Objectives; (3) Selection of Materials; (4) Development of Instructional Methods; (5) Delivery of Staff Development; (6) Implementation of the Curriculum Area; and (7) Evaluation of the Curriculum Area. The specific role responsibilities placed the school committee in charge of any final changes and the adoption of the curriculum, and the curriculum coordinator with the superintendent is responsible for the overall operation of the curriculum improvement process. The roles of principals and teachers were also delineated and will be discussed under Research Question Two. While no indication was given as to who would be involved in the improvement process beyond the initial curriculum committee, the respondent did include a detailed schedule of each content area cycle phase from 1996 to the year 2002. Thus, there is an intent on the part of this particular school system to continue the process, as was the case with the other systems regarding implementation.

All of the improvement plans previously discussed emphasized the importance of perceiving curriculum improvement as an ongoing process and not an event. The third objective of Research Question One focused on implementation of the plans and the time frames in which they occur. This question along with the results from survey questions (1c) and (1e) addresses is documented in Table 4.4 on page 109.

- Describe the degree to which the procedures are implemented and how often curriculum improvement takes place.

Survey questions (1c) and (1e) focused on the implementation of the plan and the time frame in which it occurs.. Specifically, the responses revealed whether the improvement plan had been implemented and how often it occurred.

Table 4.4
Plan Implementation and Time Frame

DEGREE		RESPONSE	%	TIME FRAME
High ▲	5	3	12%	Curriculum Council meets monthly; Writers as needed. Ongoing
	4	7	27%	Constantly; 5 year cycle; Loosely cyclical; Every 5 years, Daily; content areas are on a 4 yr. cycle; Monthly meetings; 2 yr. Cycle; Yearly; Frameworks have been developed for each core area and are in the process of developing and implementing curriculum every 2 years.
	3	4	15%	Rotating basis/every 5 years; ongoing yearly assessments to add or delete courses/programs; No set time limit; Ongoing revision; 5 yr. cycle
	2	4	15%	Only as it reviews textbooks; Begun this year; 2 year cycle; Continual basis; Done in individual schools; Continuous 7 year cycle
Low	1	1	4%	Ongoing cycle - completion every 5 years; New plan/New Curriculum Director
N/A*	0	7	27%	No responses; new Curriculum Director; in design stage
TOTAL		26	100%	

N/A* - *No response given or narrative suggested that a new director was in place and/or no set procedures existed.*

Though 22 districts reported having an improvement plan, only 3 or 12% reported a high degree of actual implementation. The majority of districts fell into a range from a HIGH DEGREE of 4 to a LOW AVERAGE of 2 for follow through. Seven districts fell into the category of N/A or non-applicable for a variety of reasons. Three districts did not respond to the question; one stated that they were in the "design stage;" and one district reported that the "curriculum director is three weeks into the position and had not been given one time to develop a procedural/cyclical plan on curriculum improvement or to write curriculum policy." In summary, the responses indicated that while most of the

schools have a process for curriculum improvement, the degree of implementation greatly varied, as well as, the time frame for which it is scheduled to take place.

Two of the six school systems who shared their improvement plans also provided sample schedules. District H's schedule for Curriculum Program Review outlined the various points in the improvement process where the academic content areas would be working during a particular school year between 1993 and the year 2000.

As this schedule indicates, each content area is given a full school year in which to complete one of the four phases of the process. Once a subject completed all four phases, it repeats the process. District T's cycle phase improvement plan revealed that no more than two content areas may be involved in any one of the phases at the same time. Similar to District H's implementation plan, each of the content areas moves through the phases on a yearly basis until the process is completed and it repeats itself. Both plans offered concrete evidence to support the findings that many school systems draft a schedule for continual improvement, however, as the previous table revealed, what often looks good on paper does not necessarily transfer into real life.

Summary

Collectively, the data gleaned from the individual responses to the objectives under Research Question One offer a vivid picture of the procedures that exist for curriculum improvement within the school systems that participated in the study. In summary,

- Most school districts have a long range plan for curriculum improvement that occurs within varying cyclical time frames and is guided by administrative regulations.

- The Curriculum Director, Curriculum Council, teachers, and principals are the primary initiators of curriculum improvement within school districts.

- National, state, and district standards, needs assessments, and teacher recommendations are the major determinants that influence curriculum improvement.

In essence, these data support the current trend and approach to curriculum improvement that was detailed in the literature review. This component of the study revealed evidence of long range continuous planning for improving curriculum based upon set procedures. Though administrative regulations may guide the procedures, the data also documents the shared responsibility among a cross section of individuals within the school district. Most important, the data revealed that in addition to standards - national, state, and district - playing a vital role in influencing curriculum improvement, needs assessments and teacher recommendations also share that influence. It is this attempt to bridge the gap between the external and internal influences of curriculum improvement that represents a positive step toward creating the learning environments that all students may benefit from in the twenty-first century.

Research Question 2: What are the major ways in which selected public school systems involve teachers and principals in curriculum decision making?

Three research objectives were developed to collect specific data related to the participation of principals and teachers in curriculum decision making. These objectives focused on the extent of their participation, the channels that are present for them to present their ideas or concerns, and the major curriculum decisions that they are expected to make. Responses to specific survey questions provide the data for analysis and discussion, and drawing some conclusions about teacher and principal involvement.

- Describe the extent to which principals and teachers are involved in curriculum decision making.

Responses to the survey questions (2a) and (2f) document the involvement of principal and teacher involvement in curriculum decision making. Survey questions (2b) and (2g) questioned the extent of their involvement. Tables 4.5 on page 113 presents the data to all of these survey questions as received from the twenty-six school systems that responded.

The results reflect the trend of teacher/principal involvement in curriculum decision making. As was expected, all of the twenty-six school systems that responded indicated that their principals and teachers participate in curriculum decision making. The difference exists in the extent of their participation. According to the responses, teacher involvement is greater with 25 out of 26 districts reporting at high levels of 4 and 5. While 17 districts reported high principal involvement, 9 districts indicated average to low involvement. Ten respondents awarded a "5" (high) ranking to both principals and teachers. In the cases of two school systems, U and GG, participation falls between 2 and 4, leaving one to wonder who is improving curriculum in those communities. System P responded "Yes – 4" to principals participation, but offered no response for teachers.

While research may offer possible explanations, such as, principals favor a greater role in curriculum and instructional matters, however, role constraints and time limits impede their ability to do so. Or, teachers are involved in making split second decisions in their classrooms, as well as, serving on committees to help determine the content of the curriculum, instructional strategies, and the resources. Responses to Research Question Three which focuses on the problems that may be experienced when attempting to involve principals and teachers in curriculum decision making may provide further evidence to explain this differences that were documented.

Table 4.5
Principal and Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Decision Making

SCHOOL	PRINCIPALS		TEACHERS	
	INVOLVEMENT	EXTENT (H) 5-4-3-2-1 (L)	INVOLVEMENT	EXTENT (H) 5-4-3-2-1 (L)
A	Yes	5	Yes	5
B	Yes	5	Yes	5
C	No Response	-	No Response	-
D	Yes	3	Yes	5
E	Yes	5	Yes	5
F	Yes	5	Yes	4
G	Yes	3	Yes	5
H	Yes	3	Yes	4
I	Yes	3	Yes	5
J	Yes	5	Yes	5
K	Yes	5	Yes	5
L	Yes	5	Yes	4
M	Yes	5	Yes	5
N	No Response	-	No Response	-
O	Yes	4	Yes	5
P	Yes	4	No Response	-
Q	No Response	-	No Response	-
R	No Response	-	No Response	-
S	Yes	4	Yes	4
T	Yes	5	Yes	5
U	Yes	2	Yes	4
V	Yes	5	Yes	5
W	Yes	5	Yes	5
X	No Response	-	No Response	-
Y	Yes	3	Yes	5
Z	Yes	2	Yes	5
AA	No Response	-	No Response	-
BB	Yes	3	Yes	5
CC	Yes	3	Yes	5
DD	No Response	-	No Response	-
EE	Yes	4	Yes	5
FF	Yes	5	Yes	5
GG	Yes	4	Yes	3
HH	No Response	-	No Response	-

- Identify the channels that are present for principals and teachers to present their ideas or concerns for improving curriculum.

The responses generated from survey questions (2c) and (2h) indicate that there are four distinct channels present for principals and teachers to present ideas and concerns.

Table 4.6 presents a listing of the channels under each of the four categories in which teachers may participate.

Table 4.6
Channels for Teacher Participation in Curriculum Improvement

COMMITTEES	INDIVIDUALS	MEETINGS	WRITTEN COMMUNICATION
Council Council	Superintendent	Faculty	Surveys
School Improvement	Asst. Superintendent	District Wide	Curriculum Revisions
Reform Team	Principal	Cross Grade Level	
Goals & Priority	Area Coordinator	In Service	
Task Force	Department Head		
Curriculum Writing	Guidance Counselor		
	Team Leader		

The responses reveal that teachers primarily participate in curriculum decision making by serving on district wide committees, by contacting specific individuals who hold administrative or a specialized responsibilities, during building and district meetings, and/or through written communications.

Principals, on the other hand, appear to hold a dual role. While serving on numerous committees whose titles reflect policy setting and curriculum development, they may also serve as the chairperson of these committees and teams, thus securing their administrative supervisory role. Table 4.7 on page 115 presents a summary of the responses to survey question (2h) that questioned the channels that principals have for participating in curriculum improvement. The responses reveal that principals appear to have many more channels than teachers to participate in curriculum improvement.

For example, in number alone, the principals' committee list is far more extensive. In additional to the initial six committees they share with the teachers that directly deal with curriculum improvement, principals also serve on the district level administrative

planning committees. Thus, a distinction can be made between their role as an administrative and that of an instructional leader. The "individuals" and "written/or communication" categories clearly support the literature pertaining to their administrative role as they deal with individuals outside of the school system and issues that reflect their "managerial/ organizational" role. The broad scope of their responsibilities as an administrator establishes the groundwork for curriculum improvement to take place within their schools.

Table 4.7
Channels for Principal Participation in Curriculum Improvement

COMMITTEES	INDIVIDUALS	MEETINGS	WRITTEN/ORAL COMMUNICATION
Curriculum Council School Improvement Reform Team Goals & Priority Curriculum Writing Curriculum Leadership Cabinet Council Principals' Advisory Special Planning Team Content Area Subject Area Staff Development Curriculum Revision Tm Superintendent's Council District Planning for Future Schools Principal/Team Leader Process	State Dept. of Ed. Superintendent East Bay Educational Collaborative Instructional Coord. Special Education Director Department Heads	Faculty Building Level Consolidated Grade Monthly Staff Administrative Council In Service	Review draft copies of curriculum revisions Staff development Committee surveys Secondary Principals propose new or revised courses Promote creation of curriculum teams Curriculum Improvement Delivery Process Give suggestions to the Curriculum Steering Committee Supervision Assure approved curriculum is implemented Support pilot programs

Additional evidence to support teacher and principal participation in curriculum decision making was gleaned from the six improvement plans submitted by the schools. In the majority of instances, the school systems delineated the roles and responsibilities of each member of the improvement process with teachers subjected to a more hands on

approach while administrators served in their "administrative" capacity in the supervisory roles. Further differences were noted in responses to the third objective under Research Question Two, which documented the major curriculum decisions that teachers and principals are expected to make.

- Identify some of the major curriculum decisions that principals and teachers ar expected to make.

Survey questions (2d) and (2I) provided respondents with a list of possible curriculum decision making opportunities that are known to be available for principals and teachers to make. The respondents were directed to check off the decisions that were specific to each of the two groups. Table 4.8 presents the results.

Table 4.8
Major Decisions Teachers and Principals Are Expected to Make

DECISIONS	TEACHERS (N = 26 responses)		PRINCIPALS (N = 26 responses)	
	N	%	N	%
Develop Curriculum Policy	07	30%	12	46%
Plan Staff Development	22	85%	20	80%
Propose New Programs	22	85%	21	81%
Propose Course Changes	21	81%	19	73%
Propose Changes in Curriculum Content	25	96%	20	80%
Proposal Instructional Strategies	23	88%	20	80%
Select Textbooks/Materials	26	100%	16	62%
Suggest Methods of Assessment	22	85%	17	65%
Other	0	0	04	*15%

**Additional decisions include (1) supporting pilot programs; (2) working in concert with staff & curriculum teams; (3) working with other communities; and (4) assuring that the district's curriculum is implemented in the classrooms of each school.*

The results indicate that teachers are involved in establishing curriculum policy in only 7 or 30% of the twenty-six school systems that responded. A little less than half of the districts acknowledge principals' involvement in the same decision. This finding

supports the results gleaned previously from survey question (1b), which indicated that 16 or 62% of the district had administrative regulations guiding their curriculum improvement plan. However, consideration must also be given to how the term "curriculum policy" was interpreted. For many respondents, curriculum policy may be in the form of national, state, or district guidelines established by the school committee or superintendent.

In the areas of planning staff development, proposing new programs and course changes teachers and principals were relatively equal in their decision-making involvement. A difference exists with the decisions that involve daily hands-on activities generally attributed to teachers. They include proposing changes in curriculum content, selecting textbooks and materials, and suggesting alternative methods of assessment. Under the "other" column, four districts indicated additional areas where principals are responsible for making decisions. They include (1) supporting pilot programs; (2) working in concert with staff and curriculum teams; (3) working with other communities in educational collaborative and the state department of education; and (4) assuring the approved curriculum is implemented in the classrooms of each school. These decision-making responsibilities reflect the administrative duties of principals who have found opportunities to implement their instructional leadership qualities.

Summary

In summary, the responses to the second research question and its objectives revealed that principals and teachers are involved in curriculum improvement within the majority of public school systems in Rhode Island. However, the extent of their involvement and the channels that exist for their participation vary due to time constraints and role responsibilities. Teachers have been afforded numerous opportunities to

participate in curriculum improvement that involve a more hands on approach. While principals have many of the same opportunities, they retain their role or status as an administrator in serving as the chairpersons of individual curriculum committees or in attending policy setting meetings with the superintendent. Within their own buildings, they are responsible for promoting curriculum improvement through written or oral communications to the staff, supporting pilot programs, proposing staff development workshops and supervising the implementation of the district's curriculum.

Research Question 3: What are some of the major problems that a public school may experience when attempting to implement curriculum improvement?

One research objective was developed to collect data related to the problems that are experienced when public schools attempt curriculum improvement. The data pertaining to the third research question originates from both strands of inquiry. First, the responses from 26 public school systems to the *Curriculum Improvement Survey* and the information gleaned from six improvement plans will be introduced, analyzed, and discussed. Next, the data obtained through the researcher's participation in curriculum improvement within various settings in one public school system will be presented. Each setting will be discussed and analyzed independently to present the problems that exist on various levels, which in turn affect the entire improvement process. Finally, both strands of inquiries will be analyzed to effectively provide a forum for making a broad and narrow comparison of the common and unique problems that exist. This research objective guided the data collection for this portion of the study:

- Identify the major problems that have been experienced during attempts to implement curriculum improvement and the degree to which they have occurred.

The twenty-six public school systems that completed survey questions (3a) and (3b) were asked to review a list of thirteen possible problems that they may have encountered when attempting to implement curriculum improvement. A rating scale from 1(low) to 5(high) was provided in order to determine the degree to which each problem has affected their curriculum improvement efforts.

The responses were recorded on a spreadsheet chart, listing the thirteen problems, the school districts/letter names, and their individual point rankings. The points awarded to each problem were tabulated, totaled, and the results transposed into Table 4.9 on page 120. Unlike the previous tables, the points were divided between three categories: High, Average, and Low. The "other" column was established to provide for responses that did not fall into any of the three categories. The shaded areas highlight the degree of range in for the majority of responses. The responses indicate that the major problems school systems experience include:

- insufficient time to engage in various aspects of the curriculum improvement process;
- the inexperience of staff members in curriculum theory;
- insufficient funds to compensate personnel for curriculum activities;
- union contractual considerations; and
- insufficient funds to implement the improvements decided upon

These findings reflect many of the major problems presented in the literature review. Problems that received an average to low average ranking include:

- the lack of interest on the part of teachers;
- the lack of school committee support;
- the lack of community support for curriculum change;
- the lack of a cohesive plan for engaging teachers and principals in curriculum change and
- the refusal to follow procedural guidelines for curriculum improvement.

Table 4.9
Major Problems School Systems Experience When Attempting Curriculum Improvement

PROBLEMS	HIGH 5	4	AVERAGE 3	LOW 2	1	OTHER
Insufficient Time to Engage in Various Aspects of the Curriculum Improvement Process	8	9	3	5	0	1 Just beginning
Inexperience Staff Members in Curriculum Theory	3	9	7	4	2	
Lack of Interest on the Part of Teachers	1	3	6	11	3	
Insufficient Funds to Compensate Personnel for Curriculum Activities	6	6	10	2	1	
Lack of Administrative Support	0	1	2	8	14	
Lack of School Committee Support	0	1	5	7	11	1 Have an Adm. Board
Lack of Community Support for Curriculum |Change	2	1	7	5	10	
Lack of a Cohesive Plan for Engaging Teachers/Principals in Curriculum Change	2	3	5	7	8	
Negative Past Experiences in Affecting Curriculum Change	1	5	9	6	4	
Misunderstanding of District=s Vision for Curriculum Improvement	2	6	3	10	3	1 No Vision
Refusal to Follow Procedural Guidelines for Curriculum Improvement	0	2	7	9	5	2 No Guidelines
Contractual Considerations	3	6	10	2	4	
Insufficient Funds to Implement the Improvements Decided Upon	3	9	7	6	0	

Only two of the thirteen problems posed received a majority of points in the low category. They include (1) a lack of administrative support, and (2) a misunderstanding of the school system's vision for curriculum improvement. While the findings for administrative support are in keeping with previous responses, the responses to the question pertaining the vision for curriculum improvement covered both ends of the spectrum. While thirteen school districts reported problems of a low average to low degree, eight other districts reported problems of a high average to high degree.

Summary

In summary, the responses from 75% of the school systems in Rhode Island indicated that the problems they encountered when attempting to implement curriculum improvement included the following: (1) time to engage in the process; (2) funding to compensate personnel and to implement the improvements that have been decided upon; (3) the staff members' inexperience in curriculum theory; and (4) contractual considerations that must be abided by both the administration and teachers. A comparison of these findings will be made following the presentation and analysis of the data gleaned from the ethnographic study conducted in one public school system.

Second Strand of Inquiry: The Ethnographic Study of a Public School System Involved in Curriculum Improvement

As stated in Chapter Three, the site for this two-year study was selected based upon its locale and the researcher's affiliation with special groups of teachers and principals involved in curriculum improvement. The school system has a student population of just above 10,000 with 19 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, and two high schools. The demographics place it as one of the largest school systems in the state

whose socio-economic levels range from low to very high; with predominantly working class to corporate or family owned businesses; and single parent, extended family, and intact family situations. A shift in the population from the eastern to the western side of the city has had an effect on class size and the need for an additional elementary school and more class rooms for the middle and high school. The district receives state and federal funding based upon reduced or free lunches, and as a result, about half of the schools qualify for some funding and resource services. For the most part, it is a pro-education community. However, affecting major educational change in this community, such as the plan to move the ninth grade students to the high school and the sixth grade students to a "middle school," required an extensive public relations campaign. Both parents, administrators and the teaching staff were encouraged to attend meetings and workshops to calm their fears and assure a smooth transition.

This effort was just one of the major goals of the school system when data collection for this study commenced. Under the leadership of the Assistant Superintendent, parents, teachers, principals and students were asked to participate in various district-wide committees (Appendix F). In addition to the Design Teams that were in charge of mapping out a plan for the creation of the middle school concept , the Assistant Superintendent formed two governing bodies, the Goals & Priority Committee and the Curriculum Council to plan, promote and oversee "systemic change." Working independently of one another, these two committees were responsible for developing a framework for curriculum improvement that incorporated the goals of America 2000, Rhode's Island Core Curriculum and the district's vision and mission for the "student we want to graduate" (Appendix F).

It is within this setting that the researcher observed and worked collaboratively with specific groups of educators and various individuals as they engaged to improve the quality of the education for all students. Data was collected over a period of two years, from January 1995 to January 1997, during which time the central administration, principals and teachers were in the process of initiating, developing, and implementing plans for systemic change. Extensive staff development was conducted by outside consultants and in house educators to assist each decision making body. Several principals and teachers "wore more than one hat;" that is, they participated on more than one committee. Instances where participants served on more than one committee are stated as each committee is defined and their involvement in the improvement process is detailed. Only the relevant data gleaned from the participants' comments relating to personal, professional, procedural or political factors that may impact their role during their participation in the improvement process are presented, analyzed, and discussed. This chapter concludes with a comparison of the problems identified by this school system to the Curriculum Improvement Survey responses from the twenty-six school systems.

Goals & Priority Committee

The Goals and Priority Committee, comprised of parents, teachers, administrators, and community business leaders, collaborated to establish the vision, mission, and goals for the school system. This committee had been meeting for a year and a half to develop the vision and mission statements for the school system prior to the beginning of this study. The participants were there strictly on a voluntary basis. Due to the length of time it took to come up with a final draft of both documents, the membership of this committee changed. Their reasons for dropping off the committee included:

- the length of time it was taking to arrive at a consensus as to the wording of the vision and mission statements;
- the presentation of current educational research by consultants or speakers which they felt was not relevant to their task;
- at times, the committee seemed stalled so that the end appeared nowhere in sight.

The researcher had the opportunity to attend the last four meetings, which were scheduled for seven o'clock on Thursday evenings. With the vision and mission statements in final draft form (Appendix F), the Committee was in the process of discussing curriculum improvement.

As Chairperson of the Curriculum Council, the researcher was asked to present portions of the Curriculum Revision Process, the "Curriculum Integration Framework," (Appendix F) that was being developed concurrently by the Curriculum Council. One comment stood out among the few that were offered after the presentation. It was voiced by representatives from the business sector of the city and the Chamber of Commerce. These two individuals immediately focused on the "educational jargon" or "language" that was used to describe the individual components of the process. As lay people, they felt that there "needed to be a meeting of the minds" in order to produce an improvement process and a curriculum framework that could be understood by individuals outside of the classroom. The metaphor they used to describe their lack of understanding was similar to a person trying to comprehend a foreign language. They strongly advised that a curriculum revision plan needs to be written in simple terms so that it can be clearly understood by all facets of the community. Several comments from the middle and high school teachers, principals, and administrators who were present suggested that they welcomed the opportunity to work with the business and private sector for two reasons.

The first reason was to ensure that the message they are trying to convey is clearly understood, and secondly, to provide a personal indoctrination into the world outside of their classrooms and schools. This interchange highlighted the first problem faced by a decision making body when they engaged in the planning stages of curriculum improvement. The lack of a common language in which meaningful dialogue and written text can be generated only permeates the gap that exists between the cultures of school and the community. Shortly thereafter, this committee ceased to meet, however, the basic framework for systemic change outlining the school system's vision, mission, and goals remained intact. This plan set the stage for the work to be completed by the next major decision making body that will be presented – the Curriculum Council.

The Curriculum Council

The Curriculum Council was established by the Assistant Superintendent in September 1989 to "serve as the clearinghouse for the development, implementation and evaluation of curriculum throughout the school system." To ensure equal and total representation, members were selected to serve from all academic and non-academic areas, as well as from elementary and secondary levels. Principals from both levels and directors of special programs were also invited to serve. The initial meetings focused on becoming acquainted with their role and responsibilities as explained by an outside educational consultant. The minutes recorded for the first two years of meetings indicate that it took the committee many hours of deliberation to define themselves, and to outline a process of curriculum revision. It should be noted that no one on the committee had taken a formal curriculum development course, but was relying on what they had learned in undergraduate method classes or from previous committee work on curriculum in 1987

when the last major revision took place. Therefore, many of the committee members were in need of continual renewal to bring them up to par on the latest research in curriculum improvement and in their individual subject disciplines which at times many did think was needed or necessary. In addition to a lack of curriculum and discipline theory, many of the members were tentative when it came to making decisions that ordinarily would be made by an administrator from the central office.

Despite given the authority to define themselves and to develop a plan for curriculum improvement, many members of the Council felt compelled to ask permission of the Administration before moving ahead. When directives from the Assistant Superintendent were communicated, the committee was either reassured of their role as the curriculum decision making body or given another task to begin. Coupled with the need for approval, new tasks to attend to, a decrease in attendance at monthly meetings, and the need to update new members, the committee always seemed to be in a state of limbo. As one member described it, "we take two steps forward and then one step back."

By January 1995, the entire school system was in a state of flux. With national and state mandates being written for individual academic areas, decisions were also being made throughout the district on a number of levels to accommodate the educational plan that had been approved by the school committee, central administration, and the Goals and Priority Committee. With the central plan formulated, it was up to individual committees to establish ways to implement the plan in the schools. "Design Teams" were busy outlining a teaming approach at the middle schools and "School Improvement Teams" were established at all three school levels to identify goals and create action plans. The Curriculum Council was preparing to review three academic areas, Art Education, English

Language Arts 6-12, and Mathematics, all of which were involved in various stages of the Curriculum Revision Process. The data that were collected over the next two years at monthly meetings and work sessions provided an arena for studying the curriculum decision making process with a public school system. An overview of the different tasks and selected comments made by members that reflect common or unique problems that occurred during the decision making process is included in Appendix G. Table 4.10 on page 128 presents a summary of the problems that were encountered by the Curriculum Council committee during the length of this study. There are several problems that are arose that are beyond ones that were previously identified.

The problems that emerged from the data were placed under four key factors identified in research reviewed previously. Under Developing, Implementing, and Evaluating the Curriculum, no data was recorded because the committee was not involved in these tasks at the time of the study. In reviewing the individual problems that this committee experienced, several additional problems came to light that had not been suggested in the Survey or mentioned in the literature review.

Under the category, "personal," the problem described as "rubber stamping what has already been approved," was experienced on at least two occasions by the Council. The members expressed their dissatisfaction with the practice of have a pre-approved program come before them when little information was available and the packaged curriculum had not been seen by anyone involved in the making the decision. The presenters provided an overview of their proposed program as a formality and not for serious consideration.

Table 4.10
Schematic of Problems in Participatory Decision Making – Curriculum Council

	PROBLEMS			
	PERSONAL	**PROFESSIONAL**	**PROCEDURAL**	**POLITICAL**
PROPOSING CHANGES To The CURRICULUM	*Meeting schedule *Lack of time during the day *Own agendas *Rubber stamping what has already been approved *Straying from the topic to discuss personal problems	*Unprepared for discussions on information that was received in advance *Lack of curriculum theory and experience *Leadership has its own agenda *Break down in communication between central administration, principals, and teachers	*Failure to follow procedures established by the Council *Additional meetings called by central adminis-tration *Inequitable consideration and treatment among and between the academic areas *Central adminis-tration changes the agenda	*Caught between central adminis-tration and/or the principals who are supporting programs that in conflict with one another *Power struggle –Council vs Princi-pals and Directors *Council does not have the full authority to enforce guide-lines
DEVELOPING The CURRICULUM				
IMPLEMENTING The CURRICULUM				
EVALUATING The CURRICULUM				

Two different problems emerged under the category of "professional." The first problem involved fulfilling responsibilities as a Council member. At least a week before the monthly schedule meetings, the members would receive copies of the documents to be discussed. However, on several occasions, it was quite obvious that several members had not reviewed the materials or completed the written portion, and were therefore not able

to fully participate in the discussion or the decision making process. The second problem involved the breakdown in communication among central administration, principals and teachers. The saying, "the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing" may be an understatement in describing this problem. Though in existence for six years with the publication of numerous documents and a brochure describing its role, only a small percentage of teachers and principals were aware of the Council's existence. As a professional organization charged with the responsibility of establishing policy and procedures and overseeing the curriculum improvement process, the Council had yet to be validated as a vital decision making body of the school system.

The breakdown in communication among the three parties extended into the next category, "procedural." Without validation from central administration, it was quite clear that the procedures that the Council had developed for curriculum improvement would not be followed by all. At the secondary level, principals and guidance counselors added and deleted courses from the *Program of Studies* and directors of special areas operated in a vacuum where they set their own procedures for improvement.

The most blatant problem arose when the area coordinator of Industrial Technology was granted permission by the Assistant Superintendent to write curriculum without conforming to the established guidelines. While other area coordinators were reminded that they had to comply with procedures, much resentment began building toward certain individuals who were "being protected" or "were favorite sons." When the Curriculum Improvement Update Sheet revealed that the date for the last revision of curriculum for Industrial Technology had been changed to current status, Council members silently questioned the validity of their role and the process they had created.

Inequitable consideration and treatment of the various academic and non-academic areas by central administration, that "what is good for one area does not necessarily apply to the rest of us," had a negative impact on the effort to improve curriculum. Central administration also contributed to two other procedural problems when unexpected meetings were called to "rubber stamp" a pre-approved program or to "act as the scapegoat" by denying passage of a program.

The last set of problems, identified under the category "political" involves power struggles between principals and area coordinators, the proposal of conflicting programs by principals and guidance counselors, and the Council's lack of authority to enforce its own guidelines for curriculum improvement. A fine gray line appears to exist among the factors and the problems that are detailed. In essence, each contributes to the others' existence and invariably impacts any decisions that are pending. The Council was caught up in a much grander plan, than the one it originally devised for improving curriculum. Rather than promoting a positive working environment in which the school system as a whole may grow and change for the benefit of all, central administration has managed to both support and cripple the Curriculum Council in an effort to accomplish its own agenda. The next group of individuals that were observed, the secondary principals, offer a closer look at the problems they encountered as they engaged in school improvement with their individual faculties.

Secondary Principals

During this same time period, the researcher was responsible for attending the in-service sessions held on School Improvement for the middle and high school principals. These monthly sessions were conducted by two outside consultants who were familiar

with the school system from previous in service sessions that they had provided. Also in attendance, were the Assistant Superintendent, the Director of Grants, the principal of the Career and Technical School and the Chairperson of the Goals and Priority Committee.

The ultimate goal of the sessions was to outline a process of "systemic change" on the secondary level and to assist the principals as they implemented their plans within their individual schools. The process involved the creation of School Improvement Teams (SIT), outlining goals for the following year, and developing action plans based upon the goals. With the push for "teacher empowerment" and "decentralization," the consultants urged the principals that "if you're going to give it away, find out what it is."

At the initial session on strategic change held in February, the secondary principals had the opportunity to provide insight into the status of their faculty before beginning the process. Three months later, the principals were given the opportunity to comment on the status of their schools as a result of their involvement with strategic planning and shared decision making. The comments elicited at both sessions were documented in a chart within Appendix G.

An analysis of the data collected at the initial in service session on strategic change revealed that these secondary principals placed the blame for the state of affairs in their schools squarely in the laps of central administration and their teaching staffs. Among the problems highlighted were teacher attitudes, lack of funds, incompetent leadership, conflicting agendas and limited funding. Their individual feelings or the role they play in the process was not mentioned as a factor. Three months later, after receiving administrative support, funding, guidance from an outside consultant, and meeting time, all of the principals reported that some progress had been made. While the progress

varied among schools, it was clear that each principal was approaching the process of strategic change and shared decision making from different perspectives, yet with the underlying assumption that they were still in charge.

Table 4.11
Schematic of Problems in Participatory Decision Making - Secondary Principals

	← PROBLEMS →			
	PERSONAL	**PROFESSIONAL**	**PROCEDUAL**	**POLITICAL**
PROPOSING CHANGES To The CURRICULUM	*people focus on own issues *fads vs. substance *attitude is "while it hasn't been broken why fix it? *teachers want respect from the school committee	*limited participation *disparity with knowledge level of individuals who are in leadership positions	*need time to meet and share *uncertain about procedures to follow	*lack of funds *local level of goals often in conflict with district goals *school committee lacks knowledge about learning, kids, teaching
DEVELOPING The CURRICULUM				
IMPLEMENTING The CURRICULUM				
EVALUATING The CURRICULUM				

Though not mentioned directly by the principals, the next group of individuals is often at odds with them over course changes and defining their role. More important to this study, the area coordinators oversee curriculum improvement in their content areas.

Area Coordinators

The data pertaining to the Area Coordinators was collected at both monthly Coordinator meetings held by the Assistant Superintendent and individual meetings with the Council Chair/researcher to discuss curriculum improvement within their content

areas. The exact role and responsibilities of an area coordinator has continued to be a bone of contention. Despite spending a release day categorizing and detailing their duties for the Assistant Superintendent, the job description remained in limbo. Politics and power struggles appeared to be at the crux of the matter as secondary principals have their own perspective on what an area coordinator should and should not do within their schools.

In the midst of this struggle, the area coordinators were also responsible for overseeing any curriculum improvement that needed to occur within their content areas. Several of the coordinators also served as the Council Representative for their respective areas. Whether in charge of a K-12 program or just grades 9-12, the area coordinators held a primary stake in coordinating the steps to assist their task force of teachers in the assessment of their curriculum and to make any necessary changes. Monthly Area Coordinator meetings were hosted by the Assistant Superintendent. These meetings served as the forum to distribute pertinent information related to budgetary and staffing concerns, program development and assessment. Periodically, the Assistant Superintendent would ask each coordinator to provide a brief oral status report of the activity that had taken place within his or her area. These reports provided insight into the problems that may occur during their individual attempts to improve curriculum. Together with the minutes from each meeting and individual conversations with the coordinators, these status reports provided several sources from which to assess the problems that arose within this setting.

During the time period in which data was collected for this study, January 1995 through January 1997, academic and non-academic areas were at different points in the

process to improve their curriculums. Information pertaining to their individual progress was documented semi-annually by the researcher in a formal report to the Assistant Superintendent. The Curriculum Improvement Update Chart in Appendix H, that was completed in February 1997 revealed each area's accomplishments within the five year plan for curriculum improvement, the areas that were on target and those areas whom for various reasons were severely lagging behind. The schematic chart on Table 4.12 on page 135 sites specific personal, professional, procedural and political factors that impacted some areas to sufficiently engage in the process of improving curriculum.

The majority of the factors occurred during the planning stage since all areas were just beginning the improvement process. In keeping with research findings, personal feelings and attitudes played an important role as some coordinators questioned the need to follow district guidelines. They much preferred to just develop the programs as needed. Embedded within the previous description is the political game being played by the administration. The inequitable treatment of different areas in having to follow procedures, the side-stepping of Council approval, the lack of professional development and the inconsistent and inequitable distribution of funds have contributed to an unhealthy and unbalanced environment in which to promote curriculum improvement.

Also, despite being responsible for curriculum in grades K-12, most of the coordinators tended to ignore what was going on the elementary level. This lack of awareness and concern also translated into the professional category where coordinators demonstrated little or no knowledge of the current research or recently published national and state standards for their area. A narrow content focus, little recent professional development and lack of principal support have reinforced their insulated positions.

Table 4.12
Schematic of Problems in Participatory Decision Making – Area Coordinators

	PROBLEMS			
	PERSONAL	**PROFESSIONAL**	**PROCEDURAL**	**POLITICAL**
PROPOSING CHANGES To The CURRICULUM	* would prefer to develop programs as needed *view district guidelines as a waste of time *inequitable representation– focus at secondary level, despite responsible for K-12 representation	*unfamiliar with current research & national/state standards *principals are not use to dialoguing about teaching and learning *no ongoing professional development within area *limited knowledge of the elementary learning environment	*not keeping to the time line for developing a propsal *inequitable treatment – some areas given the leeway to plan/develop curriculum without going through the established policy and procedures *the elementary level is not mentioned at any of the meetings beyond math and science	*Administration approving programs/eliminating role of Council *role conflict between, teachers, principals, and coordinators *certain areas feel threatened by the proposal of new programs
DEVELOPING The CURRICULUM			*establishing programs without going through the proper channels – Council is unaware of what has been produced	*principals' sidestepping policy and procedures
IMPLEMENTING The CURRICULUM			*programs also being implemented without approval	*inconsistent and inequitable distribution of funds to purchase the materials needed
EVALUATING The CURRICULUM	*evaluating the present document to determine changes is seen as a waste of time *copying a curriculum from another community so he is not reinventing the wheel"			*inconsistent availability of courses between the high schools and the middle schools/students don't have equal opportunities

This data presented a picture of the individuals who are in charge of leading the improvement process. The last two committees, the English Language Arts Task Force and its Curriculum Writing Committee, provide a closer of curriculum improvement and decision making. More important, it will provide a clearer picture of the guidelines this school system has for curriculum improvement and how administrators and teachers work within those guidelines and make decisions about the changes to take place.

English Language Arts Task Force and
Curriculum Writing Committee

Data relating to the involvement of school personnel in curriculum decision making was also collected through the researcher's participation on the Task Force and Curriculum Writing Committee for the discipline of English Language Arts. The task force, originally formed in September 1993, was headed by an Area Coordinator, a high school English teacher, who recruited teachers from the elementary, middle, and high school levels to ensure continuity of philosophy, content, skill, and instruction. Their years of teaching experience ranged from 8 to 28 years with varying levels of expertise in curriculum development.

A five-year time frame was established which scheduled May 1995 as the completion date for the curriculum document. The committees met monthly for two hours to complete various tasks that were outlined by the Committee Chair. Both committees met their deadlines for writing and submitting a proposal to revise the present curriculum and completing a draft of the new document which were prior to the official collection of data for this study. However, two events, the presentation of the new Art Curriculum, and the publication of national and state mandates for the area of English

Language Arts, occurred almost simultaneously which forced an extension of this committee's involvement in the process of curriculum decision making. In turn, both impacted the content and physical format of the curriculum document that resulted.

The data were collected from two sources. First, the minutes and agendas from monthly meetings and individual recollections from participants of the events that occurred prior to this study were documented. Second, the data relating to the two events and the committees meetings that followed between September 1995 and January 1997 are also detailed. Collectively, this information offered the researcher several prime examples of problems that may occur on various levels - personal, professional, procedural and political, and at different stages of the curriculum improvement process.

The data presented in Table 4.13 on page 139 illustrates the various "problems" that were gleaned from this curriculum improvement committee. For the most part, the problems stemmed from the participants' attitudes, beliefs and experiences. This finding supports the research which stated that individuals bring to the improvement process diverse attitudes and beliefs that are based upon their educational backgrounds and experiences within the field.

One major discrepancy, which seemed to impact each of the categories, was whether the individual hailed from the elementary, middle, or high school levels. The secondary teachers' narrow perspective of the discipline area and curriculum theory appeared to encapsulate every aspect of their efforts to make improvements. The elementary teachers' broad vision of education that called for educating "the whole child" through an integrative process was evident as they approached the task before them. This dichotomy in educational philosophy proved to be a prime source of contention as the two

groups deliberated over the changes, who would make them, and the time frame in which they would be made. This problem was compounded by the fact that the individual who headed the Task Force did not have a clear vision of the task before her. She needed to rely on the assistance of the researcher for guidance and reassurance. When the committee was presented with the task of realigning major portions of the document, as requested by the Superintendent, the coordinator resented the fact that the researcher was more or less taking over to ensure compliance, and a more professional finished product than the first document.

Politics also had a hand in events that occurred during the time frame in which data was collected. The publication of the Art Education Curriculum became the "model" to which the final drafts of all curriculum documents would be compared. The "eye catching" format and the use of media and technology by the Area Coordinator for Art Education during her oral presentation proved to have won over the administration and school committee. Though the English Language Arts Curriculum dovetailed with the K-5, was more child centered and teacher oriented, it fell short of their expectations. In addition, the national and state standards were made available in June 1996, which meant that the document needed to reflect this information. These two events brought the English Language Arts Task Force and Writing Committees back to the task of making revisions to the document's content, physical format and appearance.

An internal political game arose as the committee convened to begin the task before them. The elementary teachers had taken a back seat the first time around in permitting the secondary teachers to format the finished product. This time, they became a dominant force in making the requested changes and formatting the finished product.

Table 4.13
Schematic of Problems in Participatory Decision Making - ELA Task Force

	PROBLEMS			
	PERSONAL	**PROFESSIONAL**	**PROCEDURAL**	**POLITICAL**
PROPOSING CHANGES To The CURRICULUM	*High school teachers' narrow vision of the discipline *Anxiety level of the Chair who just wanted to "get it done" and "out of my life" *Disagree - what should be included	*Lack of curriculum theory beyond lesson plans *Various levels of proficiency/knowledge of discipline area * Sec. teachers felt it should take a shorter time period	*Unfamiliar with the process of improving curriculum *Coordinator was unfamiliar with the steps involved and how to proceed	*Comparison to Art Curriculum By the Administration *With the arrival of the national and state standards, the Task Force was asked to revise the final draft
DEVELOPING The CURRICULUM	*Elem. Teachers didn't agree with the final product that was formatted by the Chair and one H.S. teacher *Though the Chair needed and relied on the work of the researcher for the second draft, she resented it/did not want the curriculum to become known as that person's curriculum	*Elem. Teachers had a broader view of the discipline *Secondary Teachers surprised at all that is included in the K-5 English Lang. Arts Curriculum	*Through most of the writing committee members contributed, the second final draft was revised and edited by the researcher and one other elem. teacher	* Elem.Teachers did not want to overstep bounds to direct its development
IMPLEMENTING The CURRICULUM	*Sec. Teachers complained about the profile sheet and the number that they would need to fill out	*Teachers were not willing to attend an extra meeting(s) after school to receive become familiar with the new document/ one monthly department meeting was cancelled	*Limited time to in service the middle/high school teachers due to lack of professional development time	*Gr. 6 teachers forced to use an anthology series- rather than use trade books *Gr. 6 teachers complained to union/forced to use a text
EVALUATING The CURRICULUM				*Curriculum reviewed in light of the new Art Curriculum

With the secondary teachers resenting the fact that they had to spend additional time and effort to make the changes, the elementary teachers welcomed the task to produce a document that would reflect a more comprehensive approach to teaching English Language Arts.

School Improvement Team

During the course of collecting data from the designated committees throughout the school system, a school improvement team was formed at the elementary school in which the researcher taught. The initial committee was comprised of the principal, three parents, a first grade teacher, a second grade teacher and a special education teacher. Two teachers from the intermediate grades who also held positions within the Teachers Union and Chair of the Curriculum Council later approached the principal to request a seat on this committee, which he reluctantly granted. Thus, as a participant observer, the researcher was able to obtain data about principal and teacher involvement in curriculum improvement at the local school level.

The first meeting held on February 29, 1996, an informational session on strategic planning, was presented by one of the two outside business consultants that were hired by the administration to assist individual school improvement teams. The remaining sessions consisted of establishing a list of the school's strengths and weaknesses from which specific long range goals were outlined.

It was evident early on that the principal wanted to present the school and its educational program in a positive light. Several factors contributed to this conclusion:

(1) MEMBERSHIP - Despite guidelines from administration to solicit membership from the entire staff, the principal chose to ask specific teachers whom he knew personally and would not disturb the status quo.

(2) ASSESSMENT – With limited staff participation, suggestions or concerns from the rest of the faculty were not voiced, discussed or addressed, even when one of the intermediate teachers attempted to bring them to the table.

(3) STRATEGIC PLAN – The vision, mission, and belief statements had been drafted by the principal upon the school's opening at the beginning of the 1993 school year. These were the statements that were used and primarily re-edited.

(4) GOAL STATEMENTS – Based upon the list of strengths and weaknesses that were outlined at the second meeting, the focus of the action plans to be developed were on: technology, multicultural education, shared decision making and school-to-parent communication.

(5) ACTION PLANS – With the principal's primary interest in increasing the number of computers and their use throughout the school, this goal became first and foremost. Decisions made pertaining to this goal were not discussed with the faculty or the school improvement team, which in essence, negated the goal to increase shared decision making.

One key incident that involved shared decision making, principal-teacher relationships, and curriculum improvement left a lasting impression because it personally involved the researcher. In the midst of brainstorming the strengths and weaknesses, the researcher suggested that the continuity and consistency of instructional practices and the curriculum that is taught at each grade level be examined to provide a stronger academic program for students. This comment was offered based upon various discussions that the researcher had had with many of the teachers within the building. Surprisingly, the principal later stated in a conversation to the kindergarten teacher that this "negative" comment had upset and embarrassed the first and second grade teachers who had interpreted it to mean that they weren't doing their jobs. The kindergarten teacher said that she was knew that their interpretation was entirely wrong and offered to elaborate further on the suggestion for improving curriculum and instruction. However, her comments also fell on deaf ears. The message was that negativity would not be tolerated.

At the last meeting of the SIT which was held in April, the suggestion was made to present the vision, mission and goal statements to the entire faculty. While the majority of members who were present agreed, the principal was hesitant about doing so. However, the parents and one teacher who were present insisted that our committee was a representative body and that the entire faculty needed to be provided with an update as to what our decision making body had been discussing and planning. Also, it opened up the door for their comments and suggestions. Reluctantly, the principal distributed copies of the documents we had drafted and as was expected, the teachers were disturbed that they had not been consulted in noting the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The faculty had plenty to say concerning discipline, homework, instructional practices and the curriculum that was being covered at the different grade levels. Despite their concerns, which were never aired to the entire membership of the school improvement team, the 1996-97 school year began with the same drafts of the vision, mission, and goals.

Throughout the first half of that school year, the school improvement team never met nor were any of the goals addressed in addition to technology. Teachers independently voiced their concerns and then finally clustered into two entirely different camps – one in support of the principal's leadership and the other doubting his ability to effectively address the needs as they saw them. Finally, two members of the latter group approached the principal with their list of concerns – an act that he felt was totally without merit or professionalism – but done on a personal level. His response to the faculty at a hastily scheduled before morning school meeting was basically to say that he was hurt, felt wronged and if the teachers were that unhappy that they could leave and go to another school. Thus ended an initial attempt at school improvement and shared decision making.

Summary

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to examine principal and teacher involvement in curriculum improvement and to determine the problems that may arise during their participation. Six individual committees of educators who were involved in various aspects of curriculum improvement served as the sources for data collection. A review of the data obtained from these sources revealed many of the problems that were identified in the literature review that pertain to personal, professional, procedural and political issues. They included: attitudes that guided their individual agendas; a lack of curricula theory, insufficient time; lack of funding; and role conflicts among the administration, principals and teachers.

The findings also revealed problems that were pertinent to specific committees. First, the educators and community leaders of the Goals and Priority Committee raised their concerns about the miscommunications and misunderstandings that result from the lack of a common language for deliberating and writing about curriculum.

The Curriculum Council was identified as the "clearing house" for curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation within this school system. However, this policy setting body of content area representatives were often faced with "rubber stamping" a program that had not gone through district guidelines, but had been approved by the administration.

The Secondary Principals commented on their lack of authority and control in developing and implementing programs on an as needed basis. Additional concerns were voiced concerning the adoption of "fads" in place of programs of "substance" and their inability to implement site based management in promoting curriculum improvement.

Among the problems identified in observations of the Area Coordinators were: their insufficient preparation in the area of curriculum and instruction, their limited knowledge of all the grade levels which they represented, and their unfamiliarity with the current research within their individual areas. In essence, this lack of educational preparation hindered the coordinators' leadership ability to oversee a task force committee to improve curriculum. In addition, this particular committee faced inequitable treatment by the administration when it came to following established procedural guidelines and receiving funding to support the implementation of their proposed improvements.

Perhaps the most revealing problems came to light during the researcher's participation on the English Language Arts Task Force and a School Improvement Team. These two groups, comprised of individuals who are closest to the learning environment to have the greatest impact on students, proved that procedures and guidelines for curriculum improvement do not always ensure expected outcomes.

The Task Force for English Language Arts was plagued with a coordinator who was personally and professionally unprepared for the task. Conflicting signals from the coordinator revealed that she wanted assistance and needed support, but at the same time, resented the fact that she had to give up some of her authority to get it. In addition, ELA Task Force members were unable to contribute to the deliberations involved in curriculum improvement on an equal basis. The secondary teachers on this committee possessed a narrow vision of their content discipline and a lack of knowledge pertaining to curriculum and instructional practices in the elementary grades. Though more knowledgeable about the development of a literacy curriculum than the high school teachers, the elementary teachers on this committee felt they had to take a back seat since the revision was for

grades 6-12. With the publication of national and state standards for English Language Arts after the framework had been completed, the Task Force was then faced with major revisions to ensure that the framework reflected these standards. This problem was further exacerbated by the Superintendent who requested that the ELA document be reformatted to look like a framework that had recently been completed by another content area task force committee. Finally, this committee was challenged with another problem when several disgruntled teachers voiced their opposition to having a required literature text and later involved union leadership in their complaint.

The School Improvement Team proved to be an activity in futility for the teachers and parents who were members of this particular group. The controlling factor, the principal, was a major obstacle to discussing and planning any curriculum improvement other than his main focus, technology. His actions included: hand picking the team's members'; outlining "his goals" for the team to rubber stamp; chastising a member behind closed doors for presenting a goal that was wholeheartedly supported by the faculty, but seen by him to suggest that the school had problems; and controlling the agenda, dialogue and activity of the four meetings that were called over a two year period. For the majority of the faculty, the running question became, "what improvement team?"

In essence, this ethnographic study examined the practices and problems that occurred during one public school system's engagement in curriculum improvement. These data revealed problems that were documented in Chapter Two and also identified problems that were experienced by selective groups of educators. Given the circumstances that were documented within this study, the term "improvement process" proved to be in actuality an oxymoron.

C H A P T E R V

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The major purpose of this chapter is to summarize this study. First, a summary of the problem and purpose is presented. Next, the research procedures and findings are described. Finally, some recommendations for further research are detailed.

Problem and Purpose

This study of the procedures utilized and problems that public school systems encounter when involved in curriculum improvement was an exploratory investigation and a true voyage of discovery. The landscapes that served as the settings for the collection of data were demographically different school systems. Despite each new wave of curriculum reform in the last three decades, too often these institutions remained true to form in perpetuating the status quo. The persistent challenge of this study was to look beyond the obvious of what was reported in writing or discussed in a meeting. The goal was to conceptualize a clear and accurate picture of the procedures used to involve principals and teachers in improving curriculum and the underlying problems that may often hinder their meaningful participation in the process.

The two "landscapes" for data collection consisted of twenty-six public school systems. The three research questions served as the foundation for the development of a survey instrument that was distributed to the Directors of Curriculum of thirty-five school systems. The questions were also a guide for observing several groups of educators within one local school system that was involved in various states of curriculum improvement. The three research questions were:

- What are the procedures that selected public school systems use to improve curriculum?
- What are the ways in which selected public school systems involve principals and teachers in curriculum decision making?
- What are some of the major problems that a public school system may experience when attempting to implement curriculum improvement?

Research Procedures

The focus of the first strand of inquiry to answer the research questions was to determine the status of procedures for curriculum improvement on a state-wide basis. Specifically, twenty-six public school systems in Rhode Island participated in the study. The individuals responsible for overseeing the curriculum improvement process within these systems received a copy of the *Curriculum Improvement Survey* instrument. This survey instrument was derived from the three broad research questions. Responses to the survey questions were in the form of narratives and numerical rankings.

Out of the thirty-five school systems that received the survey, twenty six of them responded. Six school systems included copies of their curriculum improvement plans when they responded. This written documentation of specific plans lent support to the survey responses gleaned from each of the systems and provided both a written and visual display of curriculum decision making in six varied public school settings. The responses from all participating school systems were reported in spreadsheet format to enable the researcher to see the total data, as well as the individual details during the analysis and interpretation phase.

The second strand of inquiry primarily focused on the problems that educators in a public school system would encounter when attempting curriculum improvement. An ethnographic study within one of the twenty-six school systems surveyed was conducted

over a period of two years. This school system was selected based on its locale and familiarity to the researcher and the fact that the system was actively involved in curriculum improvement. As Chairperson of the Curriculum Council and a participant observer, the researcher had access to various settings and individuals from which data pertaining to curriculum improvement were collected. Once permission to conduct the research was secured from the superintendent, detailed notes were taken at curriculum meetings or work sessions by the researcher. In addition to having individuals from each committee review the notes, an assigned person or the committee chair would disseminate a typed copy of the minutes to all participants. Therefore, documentation describing deliberation and decisions occurred on two levels to validate the data.

Research Question Three served as the focus for the ethnographic part of this study. Once the data were collected and reviewed, the underlying problems for each group involved in curriculum improvement were identified and categorized under the headings: personal, professional, procedural and political. The problems that were identified included those validated by the review of literature in Chapter Two, as well as several others that were pertinent to the specific groups being observed. These problems in curriculum improvement served as the main focus of the conclusions that were reached about the ethnographic inquiry.

Major Findings

For Research Question One, the data obtained from the survey responses and the improvement plans revealed that most public school systems within the state have a plan for curriculum improvement that occurs within varying cyclical time frames and is guided by administrative regulations. In the case of communities that have small student

populations, curriculum improvement occurs on a less formal, yet ongoing basis. These communities have the flexibility to engage teachers and administrators in curriculum improvement during and beyond the school day. The primary initiators of curriculum improvement in all school systems are the curriculum director, the curriculum council, teachers, and principals. In addition, the major determinants that influence curriculum improvement are national, state and district standards, needs assessments and teacher recommendations. These findings support the current trend in curriculum improvement as noted in Chapter Two. However, these findings strongly suggest that for the school systems in this state, curriculum improvement is a shared responsibility among a cross section of individuals at different levels of the enterprise.

Responses to the objectives under Research Question Two indicated that teachers and principals were given ample opportunities to participate in the decision making process to improve curriculum. The channels that are present for their participation include: various committees, district-wide, cross-grade level or school level meetings, written communications and seeking the help of another individual. Improvement plans from six school systems also delineated specific roles and responsibilities that principals and teachers assumed through their participation. Specifically, the data revealed that principals hold a dual role; they are responsible for overseeing, as well as serving on a committee or subject area task force team.

Though teachers and principals are involved in the curriculum decision making process, the survey responses indicated that their participation varies with the type of decision they are being asked to make. First, the data indicated that both principals and teachers play a minor role in establishing curriculum policy. The researcher suggests that

consideration should be given to how the term "curriculum policy," was interpreted by the individuals who completed the survey. For many respondents, curriculum policy may be in the form of external influences, such as national or state standards, which may account for the low participation score for this decision category.

Next, decisions that represented the daily hands-on activities, such as changes in curriculum content, selecting materials or suggesting alternative methods of assessment revealed high teacher participation. Principals, on the other hand, are responsible for making decisions about pilot programs; working with staff and curriculum teams; working with other communities or with the state department of education; and assuring that the approved curriculum is implemented.

While both strands of inquiry provided data for the third research question, the survey results revealed the following major problems that school systems experience when attempting to improve curriculum. They include: insufficient time, lack of curriculum theory and practical experiences, insufficient funds to compensate personnel and to implement the improvements decided upon, and contractual considerations. Once again, these findings are in keeping with the problems that were identified in the literature review.

The data from the ethnographic study identified problems that had been previously expressed in responses to the *Curriculum Improvement Survey*, and problems that were specific to each of the committees that were observed. For instance, establishing a common language for deliberating and writing curriculum was a priority for some individuals on the Goals and Priority Committee. Personal attitudes and professional ability were influential factors in how the members of each committee

viewed their roles in the curriculum improvement process. The narrow vision education that existed on the secondary level impeded Secondary Principals, Area Coordinators and high school teachers to "see" beyond their walls to the elementary level. Their lack of curricula knowledge, unfamiliarity with the curriculum or culture of the elementary level, and in many instances, the act of deliberately ignoring its existence perpetuated an inequitable approach toward improving curriculum.

The political game appeared to be alive and well as certain administrators circumvented the process and ignored the existence of the Curriculum Council to ensure that particular programs were approved and implemented. In two cases, area coordinators were given permission to write curriculum without going through the proper channels which caused some resentment between and among the rest of the coordinators. Funding was also an inequitable factor as certain areas were awarded monies that was based upon the interests or goal of an administrator as opposed to the need that was documented in a curriculum improvement proposal. The comparison of two different completed documents in content and format caused the greatest upheaval forcing teachers to question the worth of their work and whether "standardization" included the appearance of the curriculum document. Perhaps the most compelling problem occurred with the School Improvement Team who for the most part was forced to function as a rubber stamp for the principal. His inability to view his school with a new set of eyes may prohibit any recommended improvements from ever becoming a reality in the near future.

Finally, a review of all the data gleaned from this ethnographic study also revealed problems concerning the implementation of the established procedures for curriculum improvement. Observations of each committee during the first task,

"proposing changes to the curriculum," revealed that responses to the established procedures could be described as mixed. Some educators made a valiant attempt to comply with the procedures while others questioned their worth.

This documentation of the procedures for curriculum improvement and the problems that educators may encounter during their participation in the process serve as a starting point to begin dialoging and establishing implications for future research of curriculum improvement. The following section identifies possible areas where further research would be beneficial.

Recommendations For Future Research

This study in its entirety examined the procedures and problems experienced by teachers and principals when they are given the opportunity to participate in curriculum improvement. The findings and individual scenarios that were presented provide a foundation for discussing recommendations for future research and for improving curriculum to leaders of school systems.

The first suggestion for future research lies with the replication of this study. The design of the first strand of inquiry could be improved in several aspects. First, the *Curriculum Improvement Survey* may be conducted through an in-person interview rather than by mail. It could also be administered to a sample of teachers and principals within the systems to increase the level of validity. Next, the survey questions could be improved by focusing them more directly on documenting principal and teacher participation as they proceeded through the individual steps outlined in their district's plan for curriculum improvement. Finally, the ethnographic part of the study could be directed toward documenting whether the procedures for curriculum improvement are

actually implemented. Further research that closely examines the implementation of procedures for curriculum improvement conducted within several local school systems may provide educators with data that determine the extent to which the plans are implemented, and if they not, question the importance of their role in improving curriculum.

As the literature review revealed, external sources in the form of national and state standards and state departments of education play a major role in influencing efforts for the improvement of curriculum on the local school level. On a broader perspective, further research is needed into how state departments of education may effectively translate national and state initiatives for curriculum improvement to individual school systems. This documentation may then include identifying ways in which to close the gap that exists among the national, state and district levels in order to establish a unified approach to improve curriculum for all children.

Another external avenue which impacts curriculum improvement at the local school level are the institutions of higher learning who are responsible for preparing educators to develop and improve curriculum. Information is needed pertaining to the programs and/or current courses that are available and their effectiveness in preparing future educators for participating as a team member or for a leadership position in curriculum improvement. A comparative study that involves the examination of procedures that institutions of higher learning promote for curriculum improvement to those initiated at the state level may reveal that an effort needs to be made to closely align their vision and to jointly establish effective leadership programs of curriculum study. Students in elementary and secondary education programs would benefit from curriculum

courses that will assist them in translating theory into practice in their classrooms and would also assure them the ability and the opportunity to work with colleagues on a system wide basis to improve curriculum for all students.

School systems are also responsible for providing ongoing professional development to increase and sustain the knowledge and ability levels of all faculty and staff members. Another study for consideration would be to examine the different ways that school systems encourage teachers and principals to become more knowledgeable about curriculum issues and procedures for improving the quality and equity of learning for all students. For as witnessed in this study, the principals and teachers relied on various levels of experience in curriculum development and diverse abilities to apply what they learned. Their roles could be compared to actors in a play whose character development is based upon emotions, past experiences and knowledge of their trade. Like actors, they were given scripts containing limited stage directions, some props and unrealistic time limits for rehearsing and presenting the final production. However, one essential element that the principals and teachers lacked, that a successful play can be assured of, is a strong director.

Blame for the problems that were cited here can not be placed squarely on the individuals who were acting out the parts they were given. Perhaps blame lies with the people who were in charge of directing each individual scene within a production of curriculum improvement – the superintendent of schools and the director of curriculum. From this perspective, further research should begin with the person in charge of curriculum improvement within a school system. An examination of the leadership role of Director of Curriculum would offer some insight into those characteristics or positive

elements that are essential to guiding successful curriculum improvement on a system wide basis.

Likewise, curriculum leadership within a single school often lies with a key individual, namely the principal, who is in charge of sending out a clear message of expectations for curriculum improvement and the strategies that will be used to solve learning problems. As was evident from the ethnographic study, complex procedures alone do not ensure a solid foundation on which to improve curriculum. Additional studies within individual schools may present some positive and effective ways to approach the curriculum decision making, development, and implementation problems that teachers and parents faced as members of school improvement teams. Further research may also provide school administrators with strategies to assist principals, teachers and parents in establishing a forum and creating a climate to share problems and find solutions to improving the school curriculum. Together, they may establish and maintain the conditions that promote supportive learning environments so that all students learn well and are better prepared for the twenty-first century.

It is hoped that this present study will be useful in helping others to take a journey through their school systems, schools, and classrooms and see curriculum reality through new eyes. Hidden behind diverse personalities and differing levels of ability, beneath mounds of often conflicting policies, procedures, and routines, and meshed with what seems the an ever present political machine, lies a rich landscape for learning that is worth a closer look.

APPENDIX A

THE FIRST STRAND OF INQUIRY: SAMPLE LETTER TO CURRICULUM DIRECTORS AND THE CURRICULUM IMPROVEMENT SURVEY

Marcia Feole Harrop
17 Sunset Avenue
West Warwick, RI 02893
401-828-0496

April 20, 1995

Dear :

I am a Reading Consultant in the Cranston Public School System currently completing my doctoral program in Curriculum Studies at the University of Massachusetts. I am presently working on a dissertation designed to understand the problems that school districts encounter when attempting to implement curriculum improvement. I believe that this study is significant to all school systems that will be involved in improving various aspects of their curriculum. More important, it will assist institutions of higher education in the leadership preparation of teachers and administrators.

To gain insight into the status of curriculum improvement throughout all of Rhode Island's school systems, I am requesting the cooperation of Curriculum Directors or the individuals responsible for overseeing curriculum in the conduct of the studying by completing the questions presented in the attached survey form. This document will assist educators in understanding the many factors that must be taken into account when designing programs to improve curriculum and establishing effective ways to involve teachers and principals in the process.

Upon receipt of your completed survey, I will transcribe your responses in the forma of a narra tive and a graphic representation. You will then be given the opportunity to review my interpretations for clarity, additions or corrections. Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. There will be no reference to you or your school system.

Please complete the survey and return it to me as soon as possible. A self-addressed stamped envelope has been included for your convenience.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Marcia Feole Harrop
Doctoral Student

CURRICULUM IMPROVEMENT SURVEY

Developed by

Marcia Feole Harrop
April 1995

To assist you in the completion of this survey, several terms that relate to the study have been defined. Please take the time to read through them in order to get a clear sense of the information that is being requested.

Curriculum Improvement *is a multifaceted term which constitutes the desire to make changes in the way curriculum is perceived, developed, implemented, and evaluated. These changes are intended to result in educational conditions that help students improve their learning.*

Procedures for Curriculum Improvement *denotes the existence of a conceptual framework which outlines the steps established by a school system for individuals to follow as they plan, develop, implement, and evaluate curriculum. Within this set of guidelines, specific roles and responsibilities may also be defined for the individuals who are participating in curriculum improvement.*

Curriculum Decision Making *is the process through which individuals who hold various positions within the hierarchial structure of a school system engage in and exert influence on a broad range of organizational, administrative, curricular, and instructional decisions. The structure and depth of the individuals' participation may vary between school systems due to the procedures that are in place for creating and implementing curricular change, as well as, the individuals' personal and professional preferences for involvement.*

Please return A.S.A.P in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided for you.

NAME_____ POSITION_____

SCHOOL SYSTEM_____

RESEARCH QUESTION #1:

What are the procedures that school systems use to improve curriculum?

(1a). Does your district have a long-range plan for curriculum improvement?

_____ Yes _____ No

(1b). Do administrative regulations exist that determine how curriculum improvement will take place in your school district?

_____ Yes _____ No

(If YES, please attach a copy of any documents you may have that illustrate the procedures and regulations that exist for curriculum improvement in your school district)

(1c) To what degree has your plan for curriculum improvement been implemented?

(High) 5 4 3 2 1 (Low)

(1d) If no procedural plan exists, what steps do you take to improve curriculum?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

(1e) How often does curriculum improvement take place? _____

_____

(1f). Who oversees the entire curriculum improvement process?

_____ Superintendent
_____ Assistant Superintendent
_____ Principal
_____ Curriculum Director
_____ Curriculum Committee
_____ Teacher
_____ Other_____

(1g). Who initiates curriculum improvement in your school district? *(Please rank in order from greatest influence (1) to least amount of influence.)*

_____ Administrators
_____ Area Coordinators for Academic & Non-Academic Subjects
_____ Curriculum Committee
_____ Curriculum Director
_____ Parents
_____ Principals
_____ Students
_____ Teachers
_____ Other_____

(1h). What have been the major determinants influencing curriculum improvement in your district? *(Please rank in order from greatest influence(1) to least amount of influence)*

_____ Book Companies
_____ District standards
_____ Community-based interest groups
_____ National standards
_____ Needs assessment
_____ Other _____
_____ Parent Pressure
_____ Research
_____ State standards
_____ Teacher recommendations
_____ Test results

RESEARCH QUESTION #2:

What are the major ways in which school systems involve teachers and principals in curriculum decision making?

(2a). Are teachers involved in curriculum improvement in your school district?

_____Yes _____ No

(2b). To what extent are teachers within your school system involved in the curriculum improvement process?

(High) 5 4 3 2 1 (Low)

(2c). What channels are present for teachers to present their ideas or concerns for improving curriculum?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

(2d). What are some of the major curriculum decisions that teachers are expected to make?

_____ Establish curricular policy for the district
_____ Plan staff development
_____ Propose the adoption of new programs
_____ Propose course changes
_____ Propose changes in curriculum content
_____ Propose the implementation of new instructional strategies
_____ Select textbooks/classroom materials
_____ Suggest alternative methods of assessment
_____ Other_____

(2f). Are principals involved in curriculum improvement in your school district?

_____ Yes _____ No

(2g). To what extent are principals within your school system involved in the curriculum improvement process?

(High) 5 4 3 2 1 (Low)

(2h) What channels are present for principals to present their ideas or concerns for curriculum improvement?

_____

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_____

(2i) What are some of the major curriculum decisions that principals are expected to make?

_____ Establish curriculum policy for the district
_____ Plan staff development
_____ Propose the adoption of new programs
_____ Propose course changes
_____ Propose changes in curriculum content
_____ Propose the implementation of new instructional strategies
_____ Select textbooks/classroom materials
_____ Suggest alternative methods of assessment
_____ Other_____

RESEARCH QUESTION #3:

What are some of the major problems that a school system experiences when attempting to implement curriculum improvement?

(3a). To what degree have you experienced the following major problems in implementing curriculum improvement? *Circle the appropriate number: 5 (High) - 1 (Low)*

Insufficient time to engage in various aspects of the curriculum improvement process
5 4 3 2 1

Inexperience of staff members in curriculum theory
5 4 3 2 1

Lack of interest on the part of teachers
5 4 3 2 1

Insufficient funds to compensate personnel for curriculum activities
5 4 3 2 1

Lack of administrative support
5 4 3 2 1

Lack of school committee support
5 4 3 2 1

Lack of community support for curriculum change
5 4 3 2 1

Lack of a cohesive plan for engaging teachers & principals in curriculum improvement
5 4 3 2 1

Negative past experiences in affecting curriculum change

5 4 3 2 1

Misunderstanding of district's vision for curriculum improvement

5 4 3 2 1

Refusal to follow procedural guidelines for curriculum improvement

5 4 3 2 1

Contractual considerations

5 4 3 2 1

Insufficient funds to implement the improvement(s) decided upon

5 4 3 2 1

(3b). What other internal or possible external problems have arisen during your attempts to implement curriculum improvement?

_____

_____

_____

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_____

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_____

_____

_____

Thank you for assisting me in this important research.

Your time and efforts are much appreciated.

APPENDIX B

THE FIRST STRAND OF INQUIRY:
SPREADSHEETS:
RESPONSES TO CURRICULUM IMPROVEMENT SURVEY

RESEARCH QUESTION #1: WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURES THAT SCHOOL SYSTEMS USE TO IMPROVE CURRICULUM?

CITY/TOWN (Code Letter)	(1a) Long Range Plan for Curriculum Improvement	(1b) Admin. Regs. Y/N	1c) Implement Plan 5-4-3-2-1	(1d) Steps Taken If No Plan Exists	(1e) How Often Does It Take Place	(1f) Oversees Process	COMMENTS	(1g) Initiates Curriculum Improvement									(1h) Major Determinants Influencing Curriculum Improvement									
								Adm	Area Co-Ord.	Cur Com.	Cur Dir	Parents	Principal	Students	Teachers	Othe	Bk Co	Dist Standards	Interest Grp	Nat. Standards	Need Assesment	Parent Pressur	Research	Stat Standards	Teachr Rec	Test Results
(A)	Yes	No	4	-	Curr. Committee of teachers/admin.	Assist. Supt.		4	6	1	0	5	3	7	2	0	8	3	10	1	4	6	5	7	2	9
(B)	Yes	No	-			Curriculum Director		6	2	1	3	7	5	8	4	0	10	4	8	2	6	7	1	5	3	9
(C)	No Response																									
(D)	Yes	No	-	Professional staff development inservices & wkshps creates an environment for curriculum improvement	No specific length of time	Curriculum Committee	B.E.P. Standards	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
(E)	Yes	Yes	5	-	Curr.Council meets monthly; Writing Comm. meets as needed	Curriculum Director	Handout included										0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
(F)	Yes	Yes	3	-		Assist. Supt.	Curriculum under revision	8	5	4	1	6	2	7	3	0	0	1	0	5	2	0	3	6	0	4
(G)	Yes	Yes	3	-	Rotating basis/ every 5 years; ongoing yearly assessment to add or delete courses	Assist. Supt. Curriculum Council		1	4	3	2	7	6	8	5	0	10	4	9	2	5	8	7	3	6	1
(H)	Yes	-	2	-	Only as it reviews textbooks	Supt. Principals Teachers	Beginning to put process in place; Handout included	4	2	0	0	5	3	6	1	0	2	3	7	5	9	6	8	4	1	10
(I)	Yes	Yes	4		5 year cycle	Supt. Curr. Dir. Cur. Council		5	4	1	2	7	6	8	3	0	9	1	10	2	6	5	8	4	7	3
(J)	Yes	Yes	3	-	No set time limit	Supt.		4	4	6	3	5	2	7	1	0	6	2	8	7	5	9	3	10	1	4
(K)	No	No	-	Staff discussion leading to consensus-improvement of curriculum in technology, cultural arts, health, etc.	Continuously	Supt./ Principal (combined position)	Currently developing a strategic plan - Goals 2000	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	2	0
(L)	No	No	n/a	District/school - 2 schools with no central office; Principal initiated; Super/Principals	Loosely cyclical; every 5 years	Supt. Principals		3	0	0	0	5	1	4	2	0	5	0	0	1	0	7	4	2	3	6

RESEARCH QUESTION #1: WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURES THAT SCHOOL SYSTEMS USE TO IMPROVE CURRICULUM?

CITY/TOWN (Code Letter)	(1a) Long Range Plan for Curriculum Improvement	(1b) Admin. Regs. Y/N	1c) Implement Plan 5-4-3-2-1	(1d) Steps Taken If No Plan Exists	(1e) How Often Does It Take Place	(1f) Oversees Process	COMMENTS
(M)	Yes (Not formally written)	No	4	-	Constantly	Principals Curr.Com Teachers	
(N)	No Response						
(O)	Yes	Yes	4	-	Daily; content areas are involved - 4 yr. cycle; monthly meetings held of content teams; teachers dev. daily lessons	Assist.Supt./ Curriculum Director (same) Team Leaders	State funding
(P)	Yes	No	4	A curriculum cycle in which each core area is scheduled for study/dev/ implement/assessment	Frameworks have been developed for each core area - are in the process of dev/implement/asse ssment/2yr.cycle		
(Q)	No Response						
(R)	No Response						
(S)	Yes	Yes	5	-	Ongoing	Supt. Curriculum Director Teachers SteeringCom	
(T)	Yes	Yes	2 just begun this year		Continuous - 7 year cycle	Curriculum Director	
(U)	Yes	Yes	4		Yearly	Assissant Supt.	
(V)	Yes	No	4	-	Constantly	Supt. Faculty	
(W)	Yes	Yes	In design stage	-	Ongoing	Curriculum Director Curr. Com	Handout included
(X)	No Response						
(Y)	Yes	Yes	5	-	Process is ongoing; present process began in 1976	Assist. Supt.	Handout included

(1g) Initiates Curriculum Improvement									(1h) Major Determinants Influencing Curriculum Improvement									
Adm	Area Co-Ord.	Cur Com	Cur Dir	Par ents	Prin cipal	Stud ents	Teac hers	Othe	Bk Co	Dist Sta nd ards	Inte rest Grp	Nat. Sta nd ards	Need Asses ment	Par ent Pre ssur	Re se ar ch	Stat Sta nd ards	Tea chr Rec	Te st Re sul ts
0	0	3	0	4	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	3	0
5	3	4	1	6	5	7	2	0	11	4	9	1	6	8	3	10	7	2
3	NA	1	2	4	4	4	4	0										
2	NA	1	3	6	4	7	5	0	10	9	5	1	2	6	4	3	7	8
*		*					*						None					
1	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	4 Sco	10	4	8	9	3	7	1	5	2	6
0	0	1	2	4	0	0	3	0	10	3	6	1	4	8	7	2	5	9
6	4	1	2	7	5	8	2	0	9	4	10	5	2	8	6	7	1	3

RESEARCH QUESTION #1: WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURES THAT SCHOOL SYSTEMS USE TO IMPROVE CURRICULUM?

CITY/TOWN (Code Letter)	(1a) Long Range Plan for Curriculum Improvement	(1b) Admin. Regs. Y/N	1c) Implement Plan 5-4-3-2-1	(1d) Steps Taken If No Plan Exists	(1e) How Often Does It Take Place	(1f) Oversees Process	COMMENTS	(1g) Initiates Curriculum Improvement									(1h) Major Determinants Influencing Curriculum Improvement									
								Adm	Area Co-Ord.	Cur Com	Cur Dir	Par ents	Prin cipal	Stud ents	Teac hers	Othe	Bk Co	Dist Stan dards	Inte rest Grp	Nat. Stan dards	Need Asses ment	Par ent Pres ssur	Re se ar ch	Stat Stan dards	Tea chr Rec	Te st Re sul ts
(Z)	Yes	Yes	2	Comprehensive Curriculum Framework - OATS (Outcomes, Assess. & Teaching Strategies)	Continual basis	Curriculum Director		0	*	0	*	0	0	0	*	0		1								
(A2)	No Response																									
(B2)	Yes	Yes	3	-	Ongoing revision on a 5 yr. cycle	Supt. Assist. Supt. Curr. Com		1	-	2	-	4	5	6	3	0	7	2	10	6	4	8	3	5	1	9
(C2)		Yes				Assist. Supt.		4	8	2	3	5	6	7	1	0	9	6	10	1	2	8	5	3	4	7
(D2)	No Response																									
(E2)	No	No	NA	3 wks. into the position- has not given me the time to develop a procedural/cycle plan for curr. improvement or to write curriculum policy	Last time was 5 yrs. Ago	Curriculum Director					1									1			4	2	5	3
(F2)	Yes	Yes	1	New to position; Strategic plan - 8/95 Vertical/horizontal articulation - 1996 Curr. Writing - 1996-97	Ongoing cycle - completion every 5 years	Curriculum Committee		1	4	1	NA	5	3	6	2	0	10	3	7	6	1	9	8	2	4	5
(G2)	No	No	2	Now site-based	Done in individual schools	Principals		1		2	3				4						DNR					
(H2)	No Response																									

RESEARCH QUESTION #2: WHAT ARE THE MAJOR WAYS IN WHICH SCHOOL SYSTEMS INVOLVE TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS IN CURRICULUM DECISION MAKING?

City or Town	(2a) Teacher Involvement	(2b) Extent 5-4-3-2-1	(2c) Channels Present for Teachers to Present Their Ideas or Concerns for Improving Curriuclum	(2d) Major curriculum decisions that teachers are expected to make								
				Curricular Policy	Plan Staff Development	Propose Adoption of New Programs	Propose Course Changes	Propose Changes in Curriculum Content	Propose the implement. of new in-structional strategies	Select textbooks/ classroom materials	Suggest alternate methods of assessment	Other
A	Yes	5	Curriculum Committee School Improvement Team Principal Administration		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
B	Yes	5	Through curriculum committees and by reacting to drafts sent out to all teachers.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
C	no response											
D	Yes	5	Teachers have access to the members of the Curriculum Committee. Draft copies of revised curriculum are shared w/all pertinent staff.		X					X		
E	Yes	5	Talking to any Curriculum Council Rep. Building Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction Grade/Cross Grade level meetings Inservices All teachers review DRAFT Curriculum	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
F	Yes (Great degree)	4	Future Schools - Strategic Planning Initiative		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
G	Yes	5	Assistant Superintendent Goals & Priority Committee Curriculum Council Individual Academic/Non-Academic Task Force Committees and Curriclum Writing Committees Voluntary Inservices Building Principal/Guidance Directors/Secondary Level Area Coordinators Department Heads School Improvement Teams	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
H	Yes	4	Being part of the committee for the process of curriculum review.		X	X	X	X	X	X		
I	Yes	5	Curriculum Coordinating Committee Content Area Committees School-Improvement Team Consolidated Grants Committee					X	X	X	X	
J	Yes	5	Principal & Superintendent Curriculum Work Inservice Planning		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
K	Yes	5	Staff Meetings		X	X		X	X	X	X	
L	Yes	4	Staff Development Committee Surveys Principal/Team Leader Process Faculty Meetings		X	X		X	X	X		

RESEARCH QUESTION #2: **WHAT ARE THE MAJOR WAYS IN WHICH SCHOOL SYSTEMS INVOLVE TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS IN CURRICULUM DECISION MAKING?**

City & Town	(2a) Teacher Involvement	(2b) Extent 5-4-3-2-1	(2d) Changes that are Present for Teachers to Present Their Ideas or Concerns for Improving Curriculum	(2d) Major curriculum decisions that teachers are expected to make								
				Curricular Policy	Plan Staff Development	Propose Adoption of New Programs	Propose Course Changes	Propose Changes in Curriculum Content	Propose the implement. of new in-structional strategies	Select textbooks/ classroom materials	Suggest alternate methods of assessment	Other
M	Yes	5	Monthly Staff Meetings Bi-Monthly grade level meetings Cross-Grade Level meetings Standing Curriculum Committee Meetings (Math - Science - Reading - Portfolio - Literacy)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
N												
O	Yes	5	Open lines of communication Union requests Standing Committees Department Heads	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
P	no response	no response	One system school enables teachers to speak directly to Superintendent/Principal	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Q	no response											
R	no response											
S	Yes	4	All teachers have the opportunity to be on a Curriculum Council. They also may serve on textbook committees. They write & update curriculum.		Make sug-gestions for topics	X	X	X	X	X	X	
T	Yes	5	School level curriclum committees District wide curriculum committees Direct access to administrative staff Self selection to any curriculum committee			X	X	X	X	X	X	
U	Yes	4	Curriculum Committees Curriculum Improvement/Delivery Process (Draft Stage)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
V	Yes	5	Direct Initiate Faculty Forums		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
W	Yes	5	Curriculum Leadership Teams Curriculum Reform Teams in all disciplines Curriculum Council	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Design and implement programs
X	no response											
Y	Yes	5	System curriculum councils representing all facets of the school program exist. Teachers are elected by appropriate staff to serve two year terms. Non-council members may also attend and be heard. (See atttached process).		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	

RESEARCH QUESTION #2: WHAT ARE THE MAJOR WAYS IN WHICH SCHOOL SYSTEMS INVOLVE TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS IN CURRICULUM DECISION MAKING?

City or Town	(2f) Principal Involvement	(2g) Extent 5-4-3-2-1	(2h) Channels Present for Principals to Present Their Ideas or Concerns for Improving Curriculum	(2i) Major Curriculum Decisions that Principals are Expected to Make								
				Curricular Policy	Plan Staff Development	Propose Adoption of New Programs	Propose Course Changes	Propose Changes in Curriculum Content	Propose the implement. of new in-structional strategies	Select textbooks/ classroom materials	Suggest alternate methods of assessment	Other
Z	Yes	2	Same mechanisms as techers under our OATS Curriculum Framework									
(A2)	no response											
(B2)	Yes	3	May join curricuum committee		X	X	X					
(C2)	Yes	3	Administrative Council Subject Area Committees		X							
(D2)	no response											
(E2)	Yes	4	Same as teachers - Historically, this has been accomplished in regularly scheduled mtgs. Among content area task forces.			X	X	X	X	X	X	
(F2)	Yes	5	Same as teachers: Curriculum Committees Vertical and horizontal articulation Team Leaders Instructional Coordinators			X		X	X		X	
(G2)	Yes	4			X	X	X	X	X			
(H)	no response											

RESEARCH QUESTION #2: WHAT ARE THE MAJOR WAYS IN WHICH SCHOOL SYSTEMS INVOLVE TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS IN CURRICULUM DECISION MAKING?

City or Town	(2f) Principal Involvement	(2g) Extent 5-4-3-2-1	(2h) Channels Present for Principals to Present Their Ideas or Concerns for Improving Curriculum	(2i) Major Curriculum Decisions that Principals are Expected to Make								
				Curricular Policy	Plan Staff Development	Propose Adoption of New Programs	Propose Course Changes	Propose Changes in Curriculum Content	Propose the implement. of new in-structional strategies	Select textbooks/ classroom materials	Suggest alternate methods of assessment	Other
A	Yes	5	Chair Curriculum Committee School Improvement Team	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
B	Yes	5	Participant on Curriculum Committees and as contributing members in the review of draft process	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
C	no response											
D	Yes	3	Same opportunity to serve on a Curriculum Committee. Draft copies of revised curriculum are shared w/all pertinent staff.			X						
E	Yes	5	Team Meetings Curriculum Council Building level meetings Inservice	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
F	Yes (to a high degree)	5	Curriculum Council: Administration meetings: Serve on special planning committees: District Strategic Plan - Future Schools		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
G	Yes	3	Administrative Council Meetings Opportunity to serve on Curriculum Council School Improvement Teams Secondary Principals have more involvement in proposing new or revised courses. Elementary Principals may oversee individual committees	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
H	Yes	3	Part of the Curriculum Revision Team	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
I	Yes	3	Same as teachers plus Principals' Advisory Committee Curriculum Coording Committees; Content Area Committees School Improvement Team Consolidated Grade Committees				X		X			Support Pilot Prog.
J	Yes	5	Supervision		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
K	Yes	5	Monthly staff meetings		X	X		X	X	X	X	
L	Yes	5	Staff Development Committee Surveys Principal/Team Leader Process Faculty Meetings	X	X	X		X	X		X	

RESEARCH QUESTION #2: WHAT ARE THE MAJOR WAYS IN WHICH SCHOOL SYSTEMS INVOLVE TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS IN CURRICULUM DECISION MAKING?

City or Town	(2f) Principal Involvement	(2g) Extent 5-4-3-2-1	(2h) Channels Present for Principals to Present Their Ideas or Concerns for Improving Curriculum	(2i) Major Curriculum Decisions that Principals are Expected to Make								
				Curricular Policy	Plan Staff Development	Propose Adoption of New Programs	Propose Course Changes	Propose Changes in Curriculum Content	Propose the implement. of new in-structional strategies	Select textbooks/ classroom materials	Suggest alternate methods of assessment	Other
M	Yes	5	We only have one principal of two schools and that person is also the Superintendent.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
N												
O	Yes	4	Same as Teachers - Open lines of Communication Union requests; Standing committees Department Heads Administrative Council	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
P	Yes	4	Member of teams, promoting the creation of teams and working directly with curriculum teams	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Wk w/ East Bay EdCol/ Dep.of Ed
Q												
R												
S	Yes	4	Same as for teachers - May give suggestions to Curriculum Steering Committee. Steering Committee: High School Principal, Assist Prin. Middle. Sch. Prin., Sp.Ed. Director, Elem. Prin., Instructional Coordinator, Rogers Career and Technical Center, Director		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
T	Yes	5	Principals are involved in various subject area curriculum committees There are regular meetings of all district principals to discuss curriculum issues. They may bring any curriculum item for discussion and consideration.	X	X	X	X	X				
U	Yes	2	Curriculum Committees Curriculum Improvement/Delivery Process (Draft Stage)		X		X	X	X	X		
V	Yes	5	No Response	X	X	X		X	X		X	
W	Yes	5	Curriculum Council Curriculum Reform Teams in all disciplines K-12 Curriculum Leadership Team; Cabinet Council	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	In concert with staff & teams
X	No Response											
Y	Yes	3	Each level (K-4)(5-8)(9-12) has on administrative representative on councils. They serve as regular members, participate fully but have only one regular vote. Principals do serve on the Supt. Council and therefore, have a 2nd chance to review programs before approval.	X (as part of a team)								Assure approved curr is implement ed in class-rooms of each sch.

RESEARCH QUESTION #2: WHAT ARE THE MAJOR WAYS IN WHICH SCHOOL SYSTEMS INVOLVE TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS IN CURRICULUM DECISION MAKING?

City or Town	(2f) Principal Involvement	(2g) Extent 5-4-3-2-1	(2h) Channels Present for Principals to Present Their Ideas or Concerns for Improving Curriculum	(2i) Major Curriculum Decisions that Principals are Expected to Make								
				Curricular Policy	Plan Staff Development	Propose Adoption of New Programs	Propose Course Changes	Propose Changes in Curriculum Content	Propose the implement. of new in-structional strategies	Select textbooks/ classroom materials	Suggest alternate methods of assessment	Other
Z	Yes	2	Same mechanisms as techers under our OATS Curriculum Framework									
(A2)	no response											
(B2)	Yes	3	May join curricuum committee		X	X	X					
(C2)	Yes	3	Administrative Council Subject Area Committees		X							
(D2)	no response											
(E2)	Yes	4	Same as teachers - Historically, this has been accomplished in regularly scheduled mtgs. Among content area task forces.			X	X	X	X	X	X	
(F2)	Yes	5	Same as teachers: Curriculum Committees Vertical and horizontal articulation Team Leaders Instructional Coordinators			X		X	X		X	
(G2)	Yes	4			X	X	X	X	X			
(H)	no response											

RESEARCH QUESTION #3: WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MAJOR PROBLEMS THAT A SCHOOL SYSTEM EXPERIENCES WHEN ATTEMPTING TO IMPLEMENT CURRICULUM IMPROVEMENT?

5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1
(High) (Low)

City or Town	Insufficient Time to Engage in Various Aspects of the Curriculum Improvement Process	Inexperience of Staff Members in Curriculum Theory	Lack of Interest on the Part of Teachers	Insufficient Funds to Compensate Personnel for Curriculum Activities	Lack of Administrative Support	Lack of School Committee Support	Lack of Community Support for Curriculum Change	Lack of a Cohesive Plan for Engaging Teachers & Principals in Curriculum Change	Negative Past Experiences in Affecting Curriculum Change	Misunderstanding of District's Vision for Curriculum Improvement	Refusal to Follow Procedural Guidelines for Curriculum Improvement	Contractual Consider-ations	Insufficent Funds to Implement the Improvements Decided Upon
A	4	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	3
B	5	3	3	5	3	3	3	2	3	4	3	3	5
C	no response						no response						
D	5	5	2	5	1	n/a (have only an advisory board)	5	5	5	Have not adoped a district-wide vision	n/a We don't have any.	5	5
E	2	4	1	2	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	4	3
F	5	4	2	5	1	1	1	3	1	2	1	1	3
G	5	4	2	3	2	3	2	2	4	4	3	5	3
H	4	4	5	3	2	3	3	5	3	5	3	4	2
I	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	1	2	2	2	3	3
J	5	4	2	4	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	4	4
K	4	4	2	4	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	3	4
L	4	4	3	3	1	1	1	3	3	4	n/a	3	2
M	5	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4
N	no response						no response						
O	3	3		4	2	2	2	4	3	2	2	2	3
P	4	3	2	4	1	1	1	3	2	2	3	3	4
Q	no response						no response						
R	no response						no response						
S	3	3	2	5	1	2	3	1	3	3	1	3	2
T	4	5	4	5	1	1	1	1	4	4	3	5	4
U	4	3	4	3	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	4
V	2	4	3	2	1	3	5	4	4	4	4	3	2
W	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	4	2	2	4	4
X	no response						no response						
Y	4	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Z	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	1	4	3	2	4	3

RESEARCH QUESTION #3: WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MAJOR PROBLEMS THAT A SCHOOL SYSTEM EXPERIENCES WHEN ATTEMPTING TO IMPLEMENT CURRICULUM IMPROVEMENT?

5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1
(High) (Low)

City or Town	Insufficient Time to Engage in Various Aspects of the Curriculum Improvement Process	Inexperience of Staff Members in Curriculum Theory	Lack of Interest on the Part of Teachers	Insufficient Funds to Compensate Personnel for Curriculum Activities	Lack of Administrative Support	Lack of School Committee Support	Lack of Community Support for Curriculum Change	Lack of a Cohesive Plan for Engaging Teachers & Principals in Curriculum Change	Negative Past Experiences in Affecting Curriculum Change	Misunderstanding of District's Vision for Curriculum Improvement	Refusal to Follow Procedural Guidelines for Curriculum Improvement	Contractual Consider-ations	Insufficent Funds to Implement the Improvements Decided Upon
A2	no response						no respone						
B2	3	3	3	5	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	5
C2	5	1	2	3	1	1	1	2	2	5	3	1	2
D2	no response						no response						
E2	4	5	3	4	1	1	2	3	4	4	4	5	4
F2	just beginning						just beginning						
G2	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3
H2	no response						no response						

APPENDIX C

THE FIRST STRAND OF INQUIRY: CURRICULUM IMPROVEMENT PLANS PROVIDED BY SIX PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS

FLOW CHART FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT, REVISION AND IMPLEMENTATION

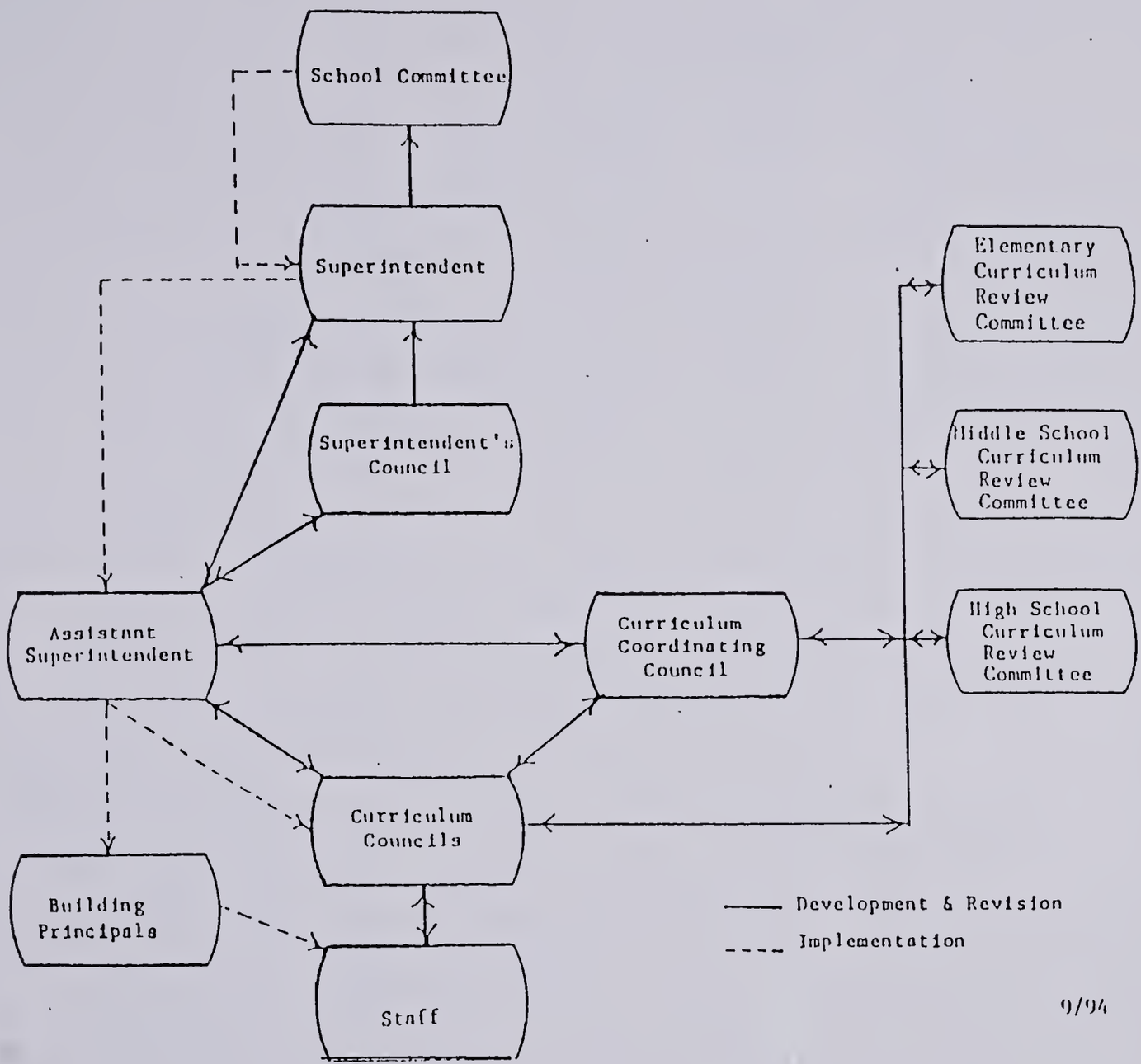


Figure C.1
Flow Chart for Curriculum Development, Revision and Implementation - District E

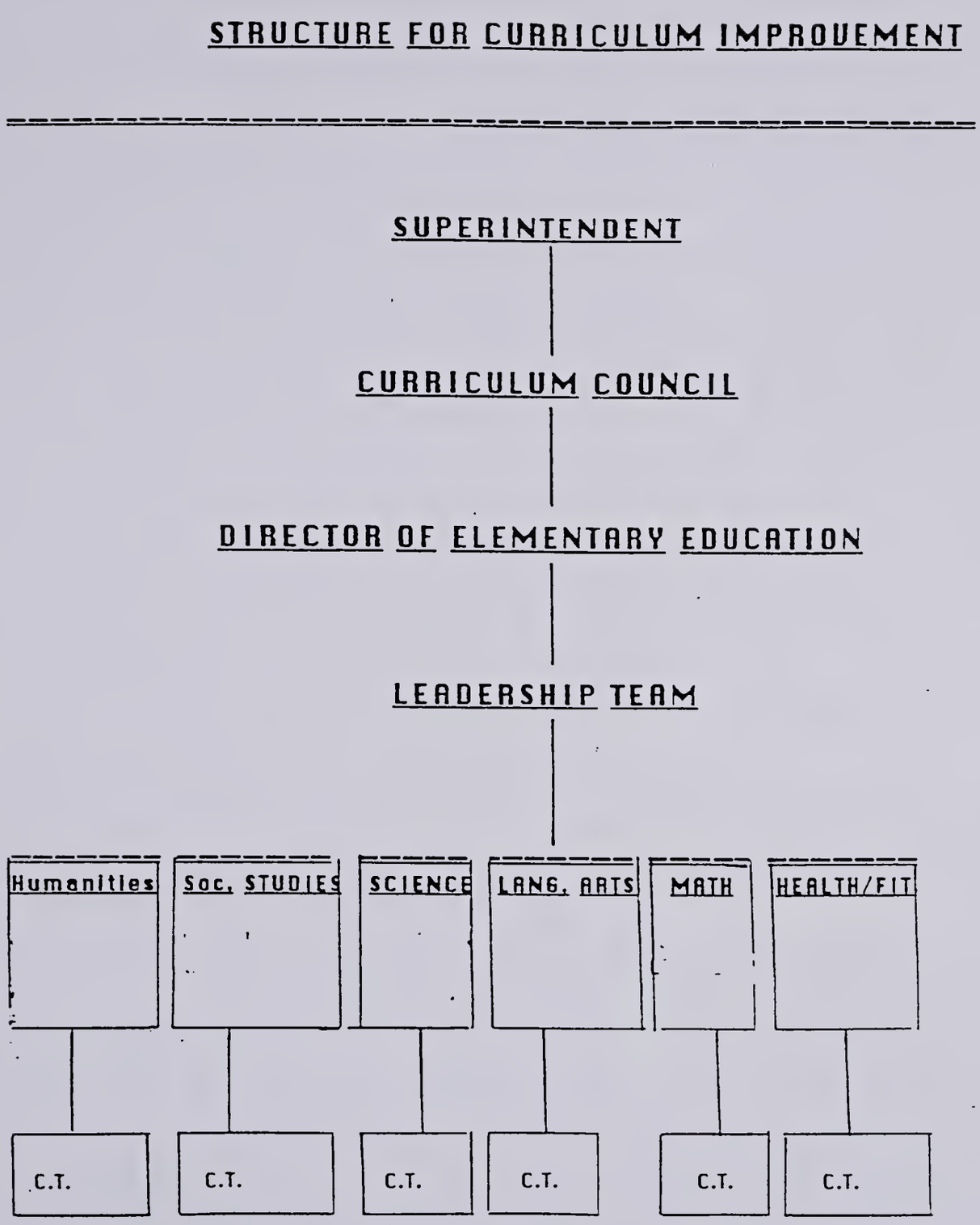


Figure C.2
Structure for Curriculum Improvement - District V

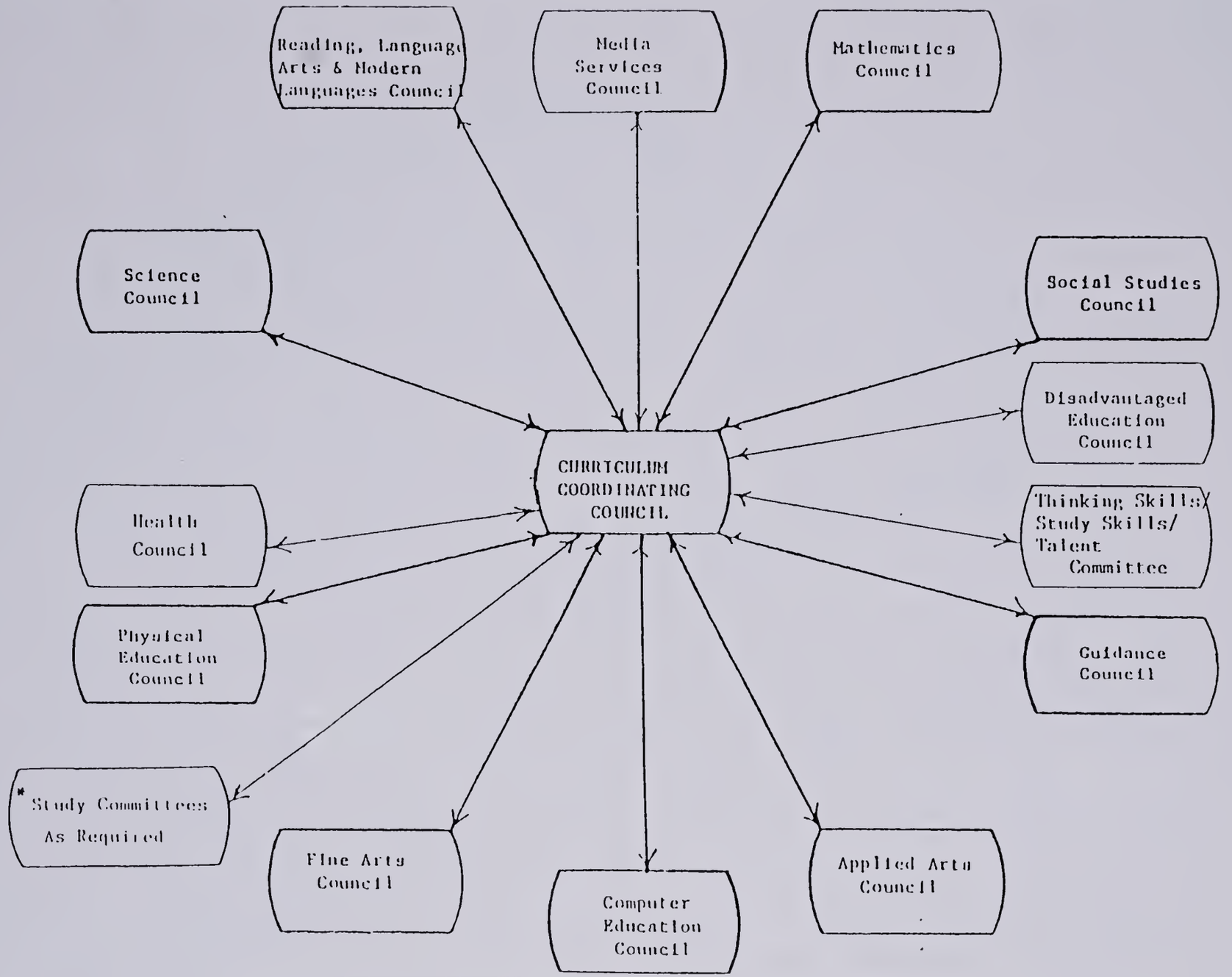


Figure C.3
Curriculum Council Structure -District Y

Figure 2

Five Phases of Curriculum Development

Phases	Tasks	Components of Curriculum Plan
1. Planning	Establish planning process	
	Establish a proposal for review procedure	
	Develop philosophy	Philosophy
	mission statement	Mission statement
	goals	Goal
	Assess curriculum guides	
	Survey teachers, principals, parents, students, community	
	Determine curriculum improvement needs	Needs analysis
	Examine national, State content standards	
	Determine goals	
2. Development	Evaluate student performance	
	Adopt curriculum standards	Program improvement
	Revise/develop the curriculum	Written curriculum
	Identify grade level expectations	Grade level programs
	Review graduation requirements	
	Integrate the curriculum	Curriculum integration plan
	Identify instructional strategies	Professional development plan
	Identify instructional material and textbooks for adoption	
	Review R.I. State Assessment Plan	
	Coordinate assessment plan	
3. Implementation	Evaluate instructional material proposed for adoption	Recommendations for adoption
	Select instructional material	
	Implement curriculum	Professional development needs
4. Evaluation	Respond to curriculum	
	Review questions	Written evaluation
	Review professional development	
5. Refinement/ Review	Respond to curriculum review questions	Written evaluation submitted to Curriculum Coordinating Committee

Figure C.4
Five Phases of Curriculum Development - District I

DISTRICT H

Mathematics Program Review, 1994-1998

The following outline details some of the activities of the Curriculum Team during the Curriculum Review Process. Throughout this time period, curriculum leadership personnel are expected to continue supervising their programs including support/supervision of staff; oversee material purchase; maintain quality instructional activities; conduct staff development and in-service; encourage innovative teaching; work towards inclusion and achievement of all learners; assist in the instructional and administrative applications of technology, etc. This outline represents an approximation of the time needed for the accomplishment of Program Review tasks and are subject to revision.

Needs Assessment, 94-95	Research & Devel., 95-96	Implementation, 96-97	Evaluation, 97-98
o List the current issues in the program (surveys of staff, pupils, parents) o Identify the highlights & commendations of the current program (staff analysis, expert consultation) o Describe the content, skills, and attitudes which E.Greenwich students should demonstrate (staff analysis, literature search, exemplary programs, expert consultation) o Describe how the program should be delivered (staff analysis, exemplary programs, expert consultation) o Plan for Summer Work to address needs o Plan for Staff Development programs to address needs o Present Needs Assessment Report to School Committee in June, 1995	o Summer Work to address needs o Budget for anticipated expenses in 96-97 o Research topics needing further study; report finding to Team; decide on disposition w/ regards to Compendium o Develop (create, revise, modify, etc.) those areas identified as needing further work o Choose texts, materials; prepare orders; finalize schedules o Conduct Staff Development Programs o Publish new edition of Compendium in June, 1996 o Report to School Committee on new program	o Implement new program o Monitor implementation, report to School Committee on status o Collect data o Adjust, fine-tune the program	o Evaluate the program to determinethe extenttowhich the goals and objectives of the curriculum have been met o Report findings of evaluation to School Committee in September, 1998

Figure C.5
Math Program - Revision Schedule - District H

- Staff development includes continuing education for staff; sharing of ideas, techniques, methods, materials and philosophy among staff, and encompasses all of the curriculum cycles. It should be correlated with goals and objectives and include evaluation.

- Program implementation is a flexible process relying on teacher expertise in instructional methods which help students use prior knowledge and talents, learn new skills, and construct new knowledge to reach the adopted goals. In order for program implementation to be successful, there must be ongoing staff development for teachers, stated curriculum goals for students and adequate materials for all.

- Program Evaluation defines clearly what is being measured, addresses program goals and objectives, is conducted by the total school community, and is used as a tool for making any necessary adjustments and changes to the program.

Following is a chart which defines the cycle phase of each curriculum area through 2002.

	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02
Needs Assessment	MA PE/HE	LA READ	CAR ED VOC ED	TECH MED/LIB	MU ART	SCI FL
Goals and Objectives	SS GUI	MA PE/HE	LA READ	CAR ED VOC ED	TECH MED/LIB	MU ART
Materials Selection	SCI FL	SS GUI	MA PE/HE	LA READ	CAR ED VOC ED	TECH MED/LIB
Methods and Strategies	MU ART	SCI FL	SS GUI	MA PE/HE	LA READ	CAR ED VOC ED
Staff Development	TECH MED/LIB	MU ART	SCI FL	SS GUI	MA PE/HE	LA READ
Program Implementation	CAR ED VOC ED	TECH MED/LIB	MU ART	SCI FL	SS GUI	MA PE/HE
Program Evaluation	LA READ	CAR ED VOC ED	TECH MED/LIB	MU ART	SCI FL	SS GUI

MA(Mathmatics), PE (Physical Education), HE (Health), SS (Social Studies), GUI (Guidance), SCI (Science), FL (Foreign Language), MU (Music), ART (Art), TECH (Technology), MED (Media), LIB (Library), CAR ED (Career Education), VOC ED (Vocational Education), LA (Language Arts), READ (Reading).

Figure C.6
Cycle Phases of Each Curriculum Area - District T

APPENDIX D

THE SECOND STRAND OF INQUIRY: LETTER TO THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

Marcia Feole Harrop
17 Sunset Avenue
West Warwick, RI 02893
(401-828-0496)

Dr. Edward Myers
Superintendent of Schools
Cranston Public Schools
845 Park Avenue
Cranston, RI 02910

Dear Dr. Myers:

I am in the process of completing my doctoral program in Curriculum Studies at the University of Massachusetts. I am presently working on my dissertation that is designed to understand the problems that Curriculum Directors encounter when involving teachers and principals in curriculum improvement. In addition to surveying all of the 39 school districts in Rhode Island, I plan to conduct an in-depth study of one school community's procedures for improving curriculum.

I am requesting your permission to conduct this study within Cranston. Cranston is my first choice because of my affiliation with our Curriculum Council and the curriculum development and evaluation work that I have completed over the last twenty years. More important to note is the fact that based upon my discussions with individuals from other communities throughout the state, Cranston appears to be in the forefront in defining a direction for student learning and the curriculum we need to meet their needs. With the development of a procedure for making curriculum changes in progress, I feel Cranston would be an ideal site for the in-depth study and would greatly benefit in the long run.

Enclosed is a copy of my dissertation proposal which outlines three major research questions and the methods that will be used to collect and analyze the data. A detailed explanation of how the in-depth study will be conducted within Cranston is provided. I believe that as a participant observer during Area Coordinator meetings, Curriculum Council meetings and work sessions, and various discipline Task Force Committees involved in curriculum revision, I will have direct access to the individuals who are responsible for making important decisions regarding the curriculum that is taught, learned, and evaluated.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marcia Feole Harrop

APPENDIX E

THE SECOND STRAND OF INQUIRY: SAMPLE COPY OF THE SCHEMATIC OF PROBLEMS IN PARTICIPATORY DECISION MAKING

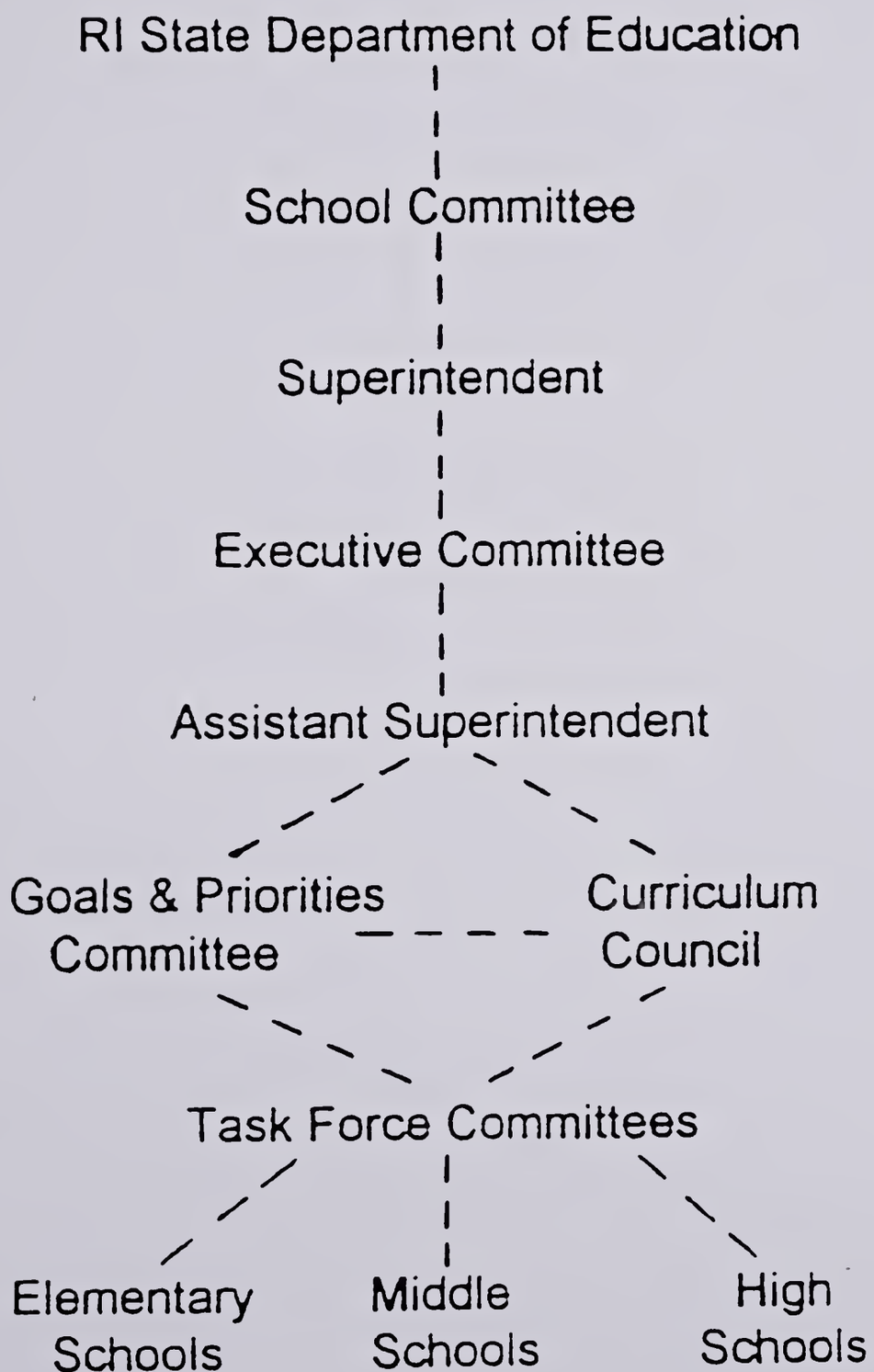
SCHEMATIC OF PROBLEMS IN PARTICIPATORY DECISION MAKING
(Sample Format)

	Personal	**Professional**	**Procedural**	**Political**
PROPOSING CHANGES TO THE CURRICULUM				
DEVELOPING THE CURRICULUM				
IMPLEMENTING THE CURRICULUM				
EVALUATING THE CURRICULUM				

APPENDIX F

THE SECOND STRAND OF INQUIRY:
SCHEMATIC MODEL OF CURRICULUM COORDINATION
DISTRICT WIDE COMMITTEES
VISION STATEMENT: " THE STUDENT WE WANT TO GRADUATE"
THE CURRICULUM INTEGRATION FRAMEWORK

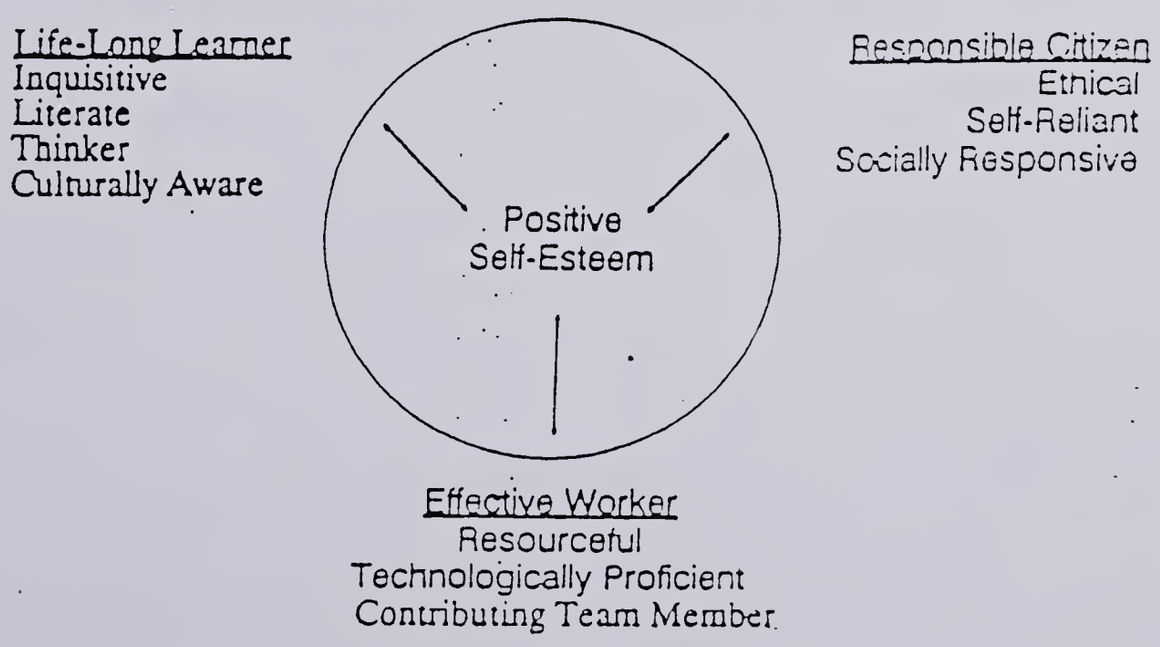
SCHEMATIC MODEL OF CURRICULUM COORDINATION IN CRANSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



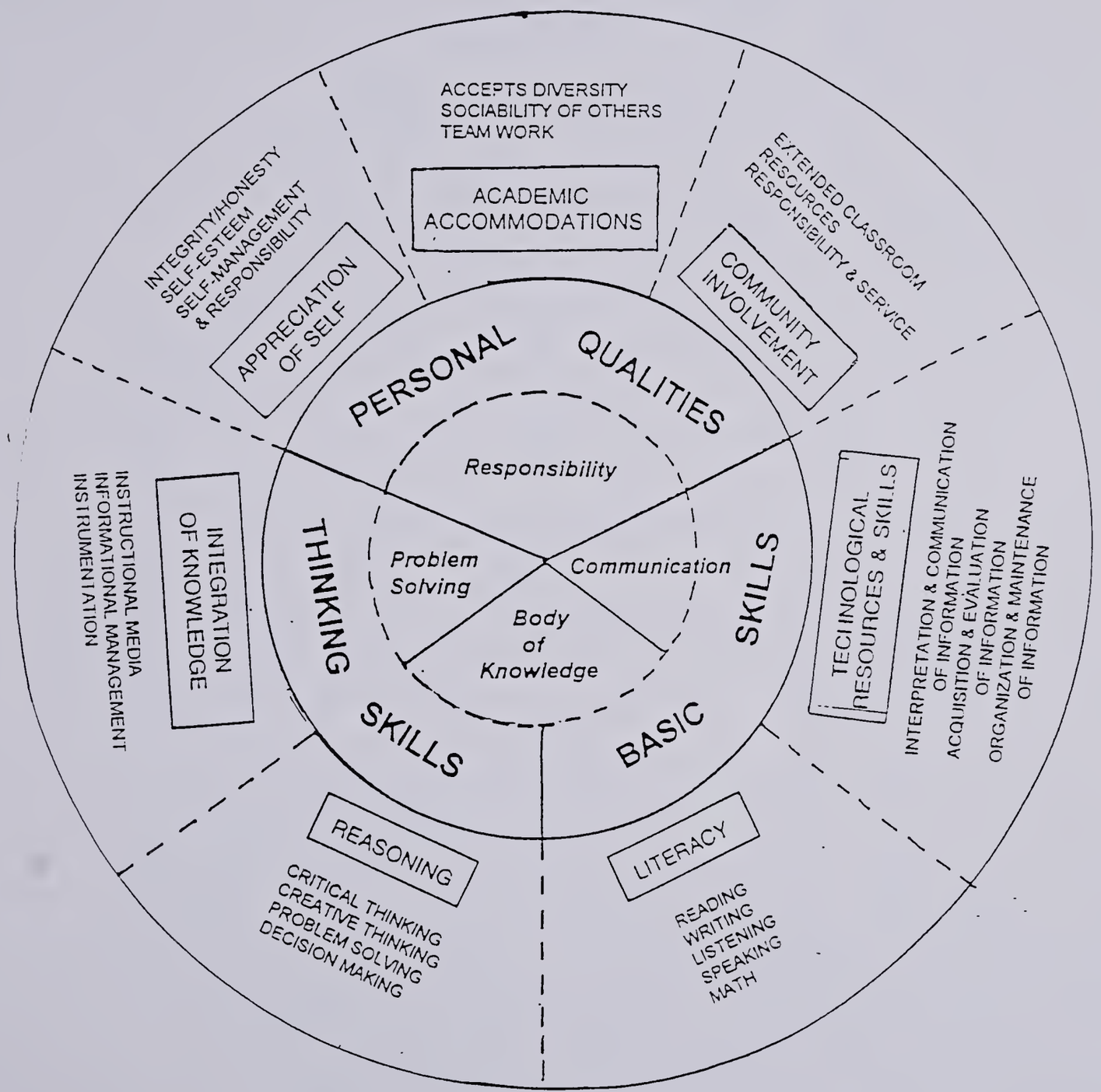
THE STUDENT WE WANT TO GRADUATE

The student successfully completing an educational program in the Cranston Public Schools is a person of positive self-esteem who is an inquisitive, literate, culturally aware, life-long learner, able to think creatively, and critically analyze information. The student is an effective worker who is resourceful, technologically proficient and contributes to team efforts. As a responsible citizen, the student is an ethical, self-reliant and socially responsive member of the global community. (See Graphic)

THE CRANSTON STUDENT



CURRICULUM INTEGRATION FRAMEWORK



(Drafted by Cranston's Curriculum Council, 1994)

APPENDIX G

THE SECOND STRAND OF INQUIRY:
OVERVIEW OF MINUTES FROM THE CURRICULUM COUNCIL MEETINGS
SECONDARY PRINCIPALS' COMMENTS DURING S.I.T. MEETINGS

OVERVIEW OF CURRICULUM COUNCIL MEETINGS (Jan.95 - Jan. 97)

MEETINGS	ATTENDANCE	TASKS	PROBLEMS
Jan. 17, 1995	4	Finalize learner outcomes and outline plans for completing the tasks designated by the Goals & Priority Committee	*Due to the limited attendance, the agenda could not be addressed
Feb. 14, 1995	10		
Mar. 21, 1995	14	Review plan for developing a Curriculum Framework; Review Theatre Arts Revision Proposal; Meeting interrupted by the Assist. Superintendent to inform the Council about a proposal that needed to come before the committee before April 10th.	*Most members had not reviewed the Theatre Arts Proposal and were not prepared to discuss it. *Did not feel they could make the determination as to where it fit into the curriculum. *Emergency meeting scheduled for April 4th to review Travel & Tourism Proposal
April 4, 1995	13	Presentation of Travel & Tourism Proposal by the Assistant Principal who was coordinating the program. Council members voiced their concerns pertaining to staffing, funding, student selection, the packaged curriculum and the time for its approval. The Superintendent had already authorized its approval without Council review. Letter sent from the Council recommended that the proposal be postponed until major issues could be addressed.	*No one from the Assist. Superintendent's has notified either of the three individuals in charge of the project. The Assistant Principal happen to be walking by the meeting room. *The program had been pre-approved by the Superintendent, however, the Assist. Superintendent was not for it. The Council was being placed in an awkward position.
April 11, 1995	11	Presentation of the Theatre Arts by a member of the Theatre Arts Dept.	*Proposal lacked specifics and Council members needed to know exactly what central administration had planned.
May 16, 1995	12	Review Career Awareness Proposals from both high schools. While one was very detailed, the other lacked specifics– both programs had already been approved for the following school year by central administration, yet the proposals and curriculum were not ready. Received a letter from the Area Coordinator for Art who informed the Council that an "unauthorized" change of an art course at one of the high schools had occurred. The title, level and meeting times had been changed and scheduled, yet no curriculum existed. Reviewed Math Revision Proposal – detailed and approved by the Council.	*Central administration asked the Council to rubber stamp a decision that did not have merit based upon the lack of "meat" and a completed curriculum that reflected the goals of the system. *Council supported the Coordinator's decision to delete the course until the course outline is completed and approved. *Math Proposal to be presented to the Assistant Superintendent.

MEETINGS	ATTENDANCE	TASKS	PROBLEMS
June 16, 1995	14	Discussed compensation for committee members Reviewed English Language Arts 6-12 curriculum framework to outline any changes that need to be made Determined that further explanation and a curriculum was needed in order to approve the Career Awareness Proposal for one of the high schools.	*As a Task Force over all the area task force committees, a request was made to also receive compensation. *The Area Coord. For English Language Arts needed direction as to how to guide her committee through their summer work to complete the framework. *Communication breakdown between the principals and guidance counselors of the high schools who change/develop new courses – central administration – and the plan as outlined by the Council.
Sept. 1995		NO MEETING	
Oct. 24, 1995	8	Presentation of Curriculum Revision Plan and Curriculum Writing Framework developed by Council members over the summer. Update of each area by the representative: Travel & Tourism Proposal re-submitted for review. Already approved by the Superintendent. ESL Director informed Council of decision not to develop a separate curriculum – but to have representation on every Task Force. Science and Kindergarten Task Force Committees will be formed. Grade 6 Exploratory Program in Foreign Language was written in June 1995, sent to the Assistant Superintendent; no one has seen it. Health and Physical Education Proposals will be ready by January 1996.	*The question continues to arise – do we have the power to ask teachers/principals to comply with this plan? *Are we just a rubber stamp or do we have a true role in the decision making process. *Fine, but how does the central office feel about this decision. *As with other documents that were requested by the Assist. Superintendent, where are they?
Nov. 1995		NO MEETING – PARENT CONFERENCES FOR REPORT CARDS	
Dec. 12, 1995	15	Discussion pertaining to the time frame of the Council's monthly meetings. The secondary principal, in speaking for several secondary ed. Coordinators, stated that the 3:30 to 4:30 time frame not only begins late but has been known to go beyond 4:30. He stated that we have lost members because of this. A change in location and time for the meeting to begin (3:10) was decided upon, however, the 4:30 deadline may need to be extended. Distributed new course changes from the Business Ed. Dept. (Needs form)	*This time frame enables the elementary teachers on the committee who are at 3:00 schools to get to the meetings. *Various issues enter into this problem – politics on the part of the principal; personal commitments for some members; and the fact that secondary teachers get out of school at 2:20.

MEETINGS	ATTENDANCE	TASKS	PROBLEMS
Jan. 16, 1996	14	Distributed the updated membership list – those areas that do not have representation, the Director/Area Coordinator is considered the representative and should attend the mtgs. Two area coordinators and one Director do not have representation nor do they attend the mtgs. They receive all of the documents/handouts, however, are not informed and have not kept the Council informed of their areas. Revised copies of the Business Ed. Courses were submitted and reviewed. The Council approved them, but the final decision is the Asst. Superintendent. The document, Proposal for Course Change, was revised to make it user friendly - the final draft would be ready for the next meeting.	*Though a decision making body, it does not have the authority to order representation. The Assist. Superintendent has interceded to no avail. *Unlike the Travel & Tourism that was approved after the program of studies, the Business Ed. Courses were not approved by the Assist. Superintendent because they didn't meet the deadline.
Feb. 13, 1996	15	Presentation of the Health Ed. Proposal by the Director. Many revisions need to take place as a result of the review. The Chair of the Council met with the Asst. Superintendent for clarification of Course Changes – shared new guidelines with the members. Asst. Superintendent requested that area coordinators gather samples of student assessments being administered and grading systems. Also consideration must be given to defining – College Prep/Honors/Comprehensive.	*Denial of the proposal because the Director, who helped develop the Curr. Revision Plan, did not follow guidelines. Major revisions needed to take place. *Overruled Council in denying the Business Courses due to not meeting the time frame for the Program of Studies. *Change in agenda – new course to pursue
Mar 12, 1996	10	Formation of five committees to oversee the completion of some activities and the beginning of those outlined by the Asst. Superintendent.	*After selecting committees, Council members decided to meet at separate locations to begin their work. Follow through?
April 9, 1996	15	Travel and Tourism was resubmitted by the secondary principals, accompanied by the Assist. Superintendent. Both provided the Council will sufficient information, despite the lack of curriculum guides to peruse. Members agreed to meet at separate locations to complete their committee work discussed at the March meeting.	*Despite great opposition a year ago, the Assist. Superintendent fully supported this program. In thinking back, Council members felt that they had been put in a no win situation, but were just following the wishes of central administration.
May 1996		Only 3 of the committees met, with 2 completing their designated task.	*Lack of a structured setting and specific guidelines – little accomplished.
Sept. 17, 1996	17	Update of each area – English Language Arts area was informed that the Framework needed to be revised now that National and State Standards were in place – changes were made.	

MEETINGS	ATTENDANCE	TASKS	PROBLEMS
Sept. 17, 1996	17	ESL teachers worked on writing the state standards this summer. Library/Media Services on hold while a new coordinator in appointed. Second grade teachers developed an assessment for their grade level which will be piloted – Council has not seen the document. Presentation of the Physical Education Revision Proposal – similar to Health, which has not yet been resubmitted. Meeting between Council Chair and Social Studies Area Coordinator to outline a plan for forming a Task Force and acquiring the standards. No representation from Industrial Arts or Literacy K-5.	*No movement since the last report. Debating as to how they will proceed. *Change in leadership-change in direction? *Should the Council see the assessment documents? *Still waiting for Health to be submitted same list of revisions/concerns as the Health Proposal. *Problem with leadership who has his own agenda *Despite pleas to the coordinators & directors – no representation; the Assist. Superintendent is aware, but has not done anything about it.
Oct. 15, 1996	17	Presentation of the Math Curriculum Framework. Discussion pertaining to the development and implementation of a workshop for all Council Representatives to review curriculum improvements plans – for both old and new members. A full day was agreed upon.	*Break down in communication between the Council members and their Task Force committees, faculties, principals. *Lack of knowledge – lack of time.
Nov. 19, 1996		NO MEETING DUE TO PARENT CONFERENCES	
Dec. 17, 1996		CANCELED DUE TO HOLIDAY	
Jan. 21, 1997		Council Update of individual areas: included Family & Consumer Sciences which had representation on the state board during the summer. Teachers are eager to begin the process – looking for direction. Most areas involved in some form of improvement or at a standstill.	*Area Coordinator did not attend nor encourage her teachers to begin the process. Often did not communicate the information she received.

SECONDARY PRINCIPALS' COMMENTS DURING S.I.T. IN SERVICES

PRINCIPAL	FIRST IN SERVICE (February)	LAST IN SERVICE (May)
Mid. School #1	-problems with participation and funds -teachers need time to meet -those teachers who are interested are already involved in after school activities	-25 people (4 groups) -have developed vision & mission; will be wrapped up next week; only the beliefs to complete -response to process – it has been accepted by the individuals who want to be there
Mid. School #2	-systemic change is slow -attitude is "while it hasn't been broken, why fix it?" -underlying feeling is that we go in "fits and starts" -staff development during the day "time is money"	-10 people; a diverse group -dealing with belief statements; on schedule -Ralph (consultant) is committed to the group -the experience has been enlightening to the group; the individuals are quite frank in their comments and respect one another's opinions
Mid. School #3	-need time to do all of this; there are brushfires every day that need to be addressed -teachers want teams put together by senority	-very vocal veteran staff on team – 3 Dept. Chairs, 2 Grade 6 teachers, 1 Resource teacher, 1 Special Ed. Teacher -had 3rd meeting with his team; working on objectives -issues identified are "communication" and "funding" -need suggestions for doing Action Plan
High School #1	-school improvement works well on the elementary level -changed the term "school improvement team" to "management council" which is made up of Dept. Chairs and teachers; as issues arise, the Council has become timid rather than assertive -local level goals are often in conflict with district's goals (local goals are not considered in the scheme of things) -individuals need to be nurtured through change; would like to take risks and be supported by the administration and school committee -teachers want respect from the school committee and need ongoing and unwavering support	-separate team formed from Management Council; made up of primarily 1st and 2nd year teachers and parents; veteran staff not participating -the team is verbal and positive -have written statement of purpose to draw directions -George (consultant) gave them the vision, mission, and statement of belief; now focusing on objectives to get idea of the Action Plan
High School #2 --- **Career & Technical School**	-school committee lacks knowledge about learning, kids, teaching -the plan for school improvement was shot down by the faculty -"fads vs. substances" – changing of names, (ex.) systemic change -disparity with level of knowledge of individuals who are in leadership positions -need time to meet and share -what type of model for change would be best for Cranston?	-formed team of teachers, parents, and business representatives -sent survey and got input from students, parents, and employees; diverse input at the beginning because people focused on their own issues, however, as time went on, they began to listen to one another, question, and buy into each other's ideas. -developed 15 objectives -issue is where do we go from here? -plan is to consolidate objectives to 3 or 4 for next year

APPENDIX H

THE SECOND STRAND OF INQUIRY: CURRICULUM IMPROVEMENT UPDATE CHART

CRANSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
CURRICULUM IMPROVEMENT UPDATE
February 1997

AREA	Contact Person	Last Revision	Task Force Formed	Inservlced Revision Process	Proposal Submitted Council	Proposal Approved Council	Approved Executive Board	Framework Developed	Framework Submitted Council	Framework Approved by Council	Framework Presented Exec. Com.	School Com. Approv	Next Rev.
ART K-12	Linda Newman	1996	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	2001
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (K-5)	Jeanette Di Nicola	1993											1998
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (6-12)	Sandra Pitocchi	1997	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x being reviewed			2002
ESL	Barbara Jamieson	1988											1993 due
FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES	Marie Pugliese & Mary DiMeo	1988	x	x Nov. 1995									1993 due
FOREIGN LANGUAGE	Pauline Della Ventura	1988											1993 due
GUIDANCE	David Alfano	1988		x Sept. 1995									1993 due
HEALTH EDUCATION	Paul Cardoza	1991	x		x being revised								1996 due
INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY	Alex Amoroso	1994											1999
KINDERGARTEN	Amelia Chouinard	1992											1997
LIBRARY MEDIA & TECHNOLOGY	Susan Bryan	1988	x	x Jan. 96									1993 due

AREA	Contact Person	Last Revision	Task Force Formed	Inservlced Revision Proposal	Proposal Submitted Council	Proposal Approved Council	Approved Executive Board	Framework Developed	Framework Submitted Council	Framework Approved by Council	Framework Presented Exec. Com.	School Com. Approv	Next Rev.
MATHEMATICS	Dennis Robidoux	1997	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x being reviewed			2002
MUSIC	Dennis DiSano	1988	x	x Spr. 1996									1993 due
PHYSICAL EDUCATION	Paul Cardoza	1988	x		x being revised								1993 due
SCIENCE	Sandra Moyer	1993											1998
SCIENCE	Cal Collins	1987											1992 due
SOCIAL STUDIES	Bill Piacentini	1988	x										1993 due
THEATER		1988											1993

FIVE YEAR CURRICULUM REVISION PLAN

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
ART EDUCATION	Business Education **	Eng. Lang. Arts Gr. K-5	Industrial Technology		Art Education	Eng. Lang. Arts 6-12
ESL *	ENG. LANG. ARTS 6-12	Science K-5				Health Education K-12
Foreign Language *	Family & Consumer Sci. **					Mathematics K-12
Guidance *	Health Education K-12**					Physical Education K-12
Science 6-12 *	Kindergarten					
Social Studies K-12 *	Library Media & Tech. **					
Theater *	MATHEMATICS K-12					
	Physical Education K-12 **					

AREAS IN BOLD have been revised

* Areas that are overdue for revision.

** Areas that have begun the process. See previous chart for status

APPENDIX I

THE SECOND STRAND OF INQUIRY: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM, VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS AND BELIEFS

MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of Hope Highlands Elementary School to educate each child by providing learning experiences that addresses each student's immediate needs and prepares them for life-long learning and their role as citizens in the 21st Century.

VISION STATEMENT

Hope Highlands School is a safe, supportive, stimulating child-centered learning environment which recognizes the individual talents and abilities unique to each child and adult. OUr school provides an enriched educational experience where school, home and community come together to create life-long learners who are able to compete in a world of constantly changing technology, cultures and societal values.

BELIEFS AND VALUES

We believe that all children can learn and have unique talents and abilities that are to be acknowledged, encouraged, and developed.

We believe that our school should provide a secure child-centered environment that is orderly, respectful, and caring.

We believe that high academic standards are the foundation of our school, where students, staff, and the community challenge themselves and one another to expect the best.

We believe that our school exists to provide students with a broad range of learning experiences, including developing an understanding and an acceptance of those different from themselves.

We believe that our school is an integral part of the community, communicating with and encouraging involvement of parents and other community members in school improvement efforts.

We believe that appropriate resources are necessary to support learning in our school and beyond.

March 1996

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